

AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND RESEARCH:
THE TEACHING OF POETRY/THE POETRY OF TEACHING

By

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The primary purpose of this dissertation is to explore and exemplify, simultaneously, what can happen at the intersections of art and research, art and teaching. Maintaining that teaching is an art full of complexity and nuance and that, for examining and understanding the teaching act, we need processes that engage with complexity and nuance, it underlines the potential of artistic vision for transforming research about artistic teaching, particularly in the secondary English classroom, and calls for modes of representation that have the power to communicate the richness of lived experience.

Within a theoretical and personal framework, this dissertation presents two exemplars of studies conducted with artistic vision and reported through evocative representation. The first, "Poetry and Passion in Teacher

Education: Personalizing and Internalizing Knowledge," examines the experiences of twelve preservice teachers in a fifth-year master's program in English education. It follows their growth, examines the issues that became central to their enterprise, and witnesses their building of community. This research is reported in the form of a reader's theater script constructed from participants' journals and poems. The second study, "Saturated with Poetry: First Draft of a Teacher," follows one of these preservice teachers through his internship in a ninth-grade English classroom, focusing on how his artistic concerns manifested themselves in his emergent teaching style. The nonchronological narrative report relies heavily upon poetic technique and poetic strategy.

Methodologically, the two studies borrow from different qualitative strategies; they may both, nevertheless, be said to fall under the broad rubric of *personal experience methods*. Personal experience methods, as defined by Jean D. Clandenin and F. Michael Connelly, focus on the experiential whole, which is both temporal and storied. They acknowledge the centrality of the researchers' own experience and the critical role of the relationship between the researcher and participants. They rely upon field texts as data.

In educational research, how do we avoid the error of excessive abstraction? How do we stay connected to the human purposes of research? This study is concerned with

these questions and with possibilities for modes of representation that help us retain the human dimension in knowledge acquired about teaching through research.

CHAPTER 1
AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND RESEARCH

Prologue

This is not a conventional dissertation. It is a dissertation that reflects its moment. More specifically, it marks a moment in the evolution of the academy. We live in a time when mysteries of the human brain, a few at a time, are being unlocked. We know things now about the nature of learning that we simply did not know, could not know, at midcentury. Schools of education have been at the forefront in applying to human concerns new knowledge about thinking and learning. In recent years, preservice teachers have been actively engaged with concepts of multiple intelligences, with expanded understandings of what it means to know and to demonstrate knowledge, and with resultant revisions of what it means to assess knowledge.

Now, within their own institutions, colleges of education are beginning to enact revised understandings of what it means to know and expanded possibilities for reporting research. This dissertation represents some of those revised understandings and explores pedagogical issues within the realm of those expanded possibilities.

One of the ways this dissertation differs from its traditional precedents is in its embrace of multiplicity. There are a number of things "going on" here. Within a conceptual framework, which is both theoretical and personal, there are embedded two studies, which focus on pedagogy. Each of these is concerned with the delicate interrelations of art, poetry, teaching, and teacher education, to such an extent that they converge as stages of a unified inquiry.

In this dissertation, the threads of multiple issues are spun into a web of larger concern: artistic ways of knowing and of representing knowledge. This is a central concern for me. My own multiple identities--teacher, poet, researcher--are bound together by aesthetic perception and by a penchant to create form. The form of my teaching has always been critical to its mission, and the form of this dissertation is part of its content.

Aesthetic Vision

Aesthetic vision suggests a high level of consciousness about what one sees. It suggests an alertness, a "wide-awakeness" that Maxine Greene has urged educators and researchers to learn from artists (1987b, 1987c, 1994).

Aesthetic vision engages a sensitivity to suggestion, to pattern, to that which is beneath the surface as well as to the surface itself. It requires a fine attention to detail and form--the perception of relations (tensions and

harmonies), the perception of nuance (colors of meaning), and the perception of change (shifts and subtle motions).

Aesthetic vision adjusts the flow of time. It may seize a moment in order to stare at it and see more fully, more deeply; but aesthetic vision does not assume that what one sees in the moment is what one will always see. It perceives the potential for transformation within any apparent fixity, whether that fixity is a block of wood, a piece of clay, a jumble of words, or the configuration of a classroom, the behavior of an individual child.

Aesthetic vision is always from a specific point of view, filtered by a specific consciousness. It is personal and situational. It includes emotion, imagination, and paradox. It embraces complexity.

Teachers who function with aesthetic vision perceive the dynamic nature of what is unfolding in front of them. They know how to "read" students, respond quickly, and reshape the flow of events. They construct personal frameworks for their own understandings. They do not accept that what they see is immutable. They have a finely tuned sense of how to move toward new configurations.

Researchers with aesthetic vision, too, perceive the dynamics of a situation and know how to "read" it. They look at details within their contexts, perceive relations among the parts and between the parts and the whole. They look for pattern within disorder and for unity beneath

superficial disruption. They construct forms and suggest meanings.

The teacher-as-artist is simultaneously a researcher. The researcher-as-artist becomes, through forms created and made public, a teacher. This dissertation explores the potential of artistic vision for transforming both teaching and research. Its particular emphasis is on the teaching of English and on research in secondary English classrooms.

The Autobiographical Context

In 1992, when I entered my PhD program, I had just spent several years nurturing a poet's way of seeing, shaping, interpreting, understanding. My nontraditional MFA program had turned out to be everything I had always wanted from my education--a fine balance of autonomy and guidance; a definition of rigor that went deeper than rules; an honoring of both independence and community; a blurring of semester divisions that allowed for a sense of ongoing project; significant narrative evaluation. I graduated from that program in Swannanoa, North Carolina, on a January afternoon, light snow falling. I got in the car, drove all night, began my PhD program two weeks late at the University of Florida, and was in culture shock for a whole semester. I moved uneasily in the linearity of traditional academic structures. Having had an apprenticeship in sensing and naming what I needed to know, I was uncomfortable with the external authority now telling me what I needed to know.

Further complicating matters, in my work as a poet I had learned to trust intuitive, nonlinear processes; I had discovered altered relationships with time; I had embraced an understanding of knowledge that included emotion and imagination; I had learned to engage with multiplicity and complexity. But when I tried to function in concert with what I had learned, I was often told with varying sorts of language, "You can't do that." I felt alien and divided, my whole life a huge dichotomy--the poet and the academic. I pursued my academic career in an ongoing tension.

I had some professors, however, who offered me choices and autonomy, who were willing to let me reinvent tasks and methods, and who gave me glimmers of hope that my creative dimension might have some role to play in academic work. In a course described as "Introduction to Qualitative Research," my parallel worlds began to intersect.

During that semester, I came to know deeply the work of John Dewey, Maxine Greene, and Elliot Eisner. In the writings of these three (and others, but especially these) I found permission to be who I was. I located myself at the intersections of art and research, history and imagination, the emotive and the logical, rebellion and order. I gained language for what I had known intuitively about relationships that bound teaching and writing at the level of deep process. And I knew for the first time that I could

be a poet and a researcher in the same body doing the same work in the world.

I was finally hearing in academia, voices that were consistent with my internal voices, voices that validated my ways of seeing and knowing. I found Maxine Greene writing of wholeness, challenging dichotomous thinking, and celebrating the role of literature as an integration of cognition and emotion: "When we consider integrations and wholeness, [we must] break with such notions as those that split the cognitive from the emotional" (1978a, 188).

I discovered Elliot Eisner defying traditional academic definitions of rationality: "What we are seeing when we see artists work--on the stage, in the studio, in the concert hall, and in a classroom--is not the absence of rationality and intelligence, but the ultimate manifestation of its realization" (1979, 273).

I found affirmation in Dewey's assertion that
to think effectively in terms of relation of
qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to
think in terms of symbols, verbal and
mathematical. . . . [P]roduction of a work of
genuine art probably demands more intelligence
than does most of the so-called thinking that goes
on among those who pride themselves on being
"intellectuals." (1934, 46)

Donald Schön echoed Dewey: "Artistry is an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing, though different in crucial respects from our standard model of professional knowledge" (1990, 13). And Laurence Stenhouse brought art and inquiry

clearly into the same arena: "All good art is inquiry and experiment. . . . The artist is the researcher *par excellence*" (1988, 47). As I read, the dichotomies with which I had struggled imploded in my consciousness and in my body.

"In my body." This is not a very traditionally academic thing to say. All of these other dichotomies exist in the shadow of one that has spirited all of Western civilization: mind and body. The life of the academy as keeper of knowledge has traditionally been the "life of the mind." Body has had little or nothing to do with it.

When I first started spending time among serious poets, I was struck by the ways they talked about poetry, how different these were from the ways I had always heard English teachers talk about poetry. English teachers asked, "What does this poem mean?" and expected a specific answer. Poets were asking, "What is your experience of this poem?"; they hoped for multiple answers. English teachers seemed interested in getting knowledge into the brain. Poets were concerned with getting knowledge into the body. They talked about it in exactly those terms: "getting knowledge into the body." They wanted to give their readers not only an insight, but also a lived experience.

The implications of that concept for teaching were immediately clear to me. Knowledge personalized and internalized is knowledge that sticks. The word made flesh

is a powerful word. I see now that "knowledge in the body" is also an important concept for research.

A Review of the Theoretical Literature Redefining Cognition

Novelist Jeanette Winterson, in her book of essays, *Art [Objects]* (1996), maintains that artists know things ahead of time. Sometimes, she says, artists know things before scientists do because they have learned to read and trust experience, feeling, and intuition. Leonard Schlain, author of *Art and Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time, and Light* (1991), agrees. In his extended study of the histories of art and physics, he demonstrates convincingly that major breakthroughs in the world of physics have consistently been prefigured in the work of visual and literary artists. There is now an increasing body of empirical evidence suggesting that Winterson, Schlain, and others who take this position are right.

In 1994, Antonio Damasio, head of the department of neurology at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, published his book, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Cognition, and the Human Brain*. He reports in the vernacular on more than a decade of his research on the neurological underpinnings of reason. Introducing this work, Damasio writes,

I had grown up accustomed to thinking that the mechanisms of reason existed in a separate province of the mind, where emotion should not be allowed to intrude, and when I thought of the

brain behind that mind, I envisioned separate neural systems for reason and emotion. This was a widely held view of the relation between reason and emotion, in mental and neural terms. (xi)

Damasio's research has led him, however, to propose, in his own words,

that the body, as represented in the brain, may constitute the indispensable frame of reference for the neural processes that we experience as the mind; that our very organism rather than some absolute external reality is used as the ground reference for the constructions we make of the world around us . . . ; that our most refined thoughts and best actions, our greatest joys and deepest sorrows, use the body as a yardstick. (xvi-xvii)

The mind," Damasio tells us, "is embodied, in the full sense of the term, not just embrained" (118).

What the empirical sciences are now confirming about the human brain is forcing us to question old dichotomies and to perceive new relations. It is no longer possible, for example, to make the simplistic distinction between cognition and affect. We now know that at the level of neurobiology, cognition and feeling are interrelated and interdependent. Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine's extensive review and analysis of brain research led them to propose in *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain* (1991) twelve principles of brain-based learning. The fifth principle directly addresses the thinking-feeling connection: *Emotions are critical to patterning. Patterning relates to meaningful organization and*

categorization of information. "In a way," state Caine and Caine, "the brain is both artist and scientist, attempting to discern and understand patterns as they occur and giving expression to unique and creative patterns of its own" (1991, 81). This fifth principle--*emotions are critical to patterning*--restates the conclusion of a number of studies (Halgren, Wilson, Squires, Engel, Walter, and Crandall 1983; Lakoff 1987; McGuinness and Pribram 1980; Ornstein and Sobel 1987; Rosenfield 1988) that find emotion to be integrated with the functions of cognition.

Caine and Caine urge us to "reject a definition of 'meaningfulness' that is restricted to some notion of intellectual understanding devoid of an emotional connection that is experienced as a 'felt' sense" (1991, 92). On the basis of their research, they argue that *felt meaning* occurs when emotions and cognition function together, generating a sense of interconnectedness and personally significant pattern.

The thinking-feeling connection has always been acknowledged by artists. The artist's way of knowing and perceiving is characterized, in part, by this connectedness and by a strong sense that cognition is located in the whole body, not just in the brain. Poet Donald Hall writes, "Poetry by its bodily, mental, and emotional complex educates the sensibility, thinking and feeling appropriately melded together" (1994, 11-12). This refusal of the mind-

body dichotomy explains, to some extent, the marginalization of the artist during a positivist era.

Moving Beyond Positivism

During the course of this century, the field of education has thrown itself headlong into the pursuit of a science of education. Building on the positivistic base of the scientific method, as developed within the natural sciences, educational researchers and theorists have sought to define education in objective terms. The goal has been to make teaching and learning precise and efficient by uncovering the underlying laws of these phenomena. This goal has been pursued with strict focus on observable events, objective methods of data gathering, and quantification of results.

As we near the century's end, we are questioning the application of this paradigm to the complexity of the educational process (Caine and Caine 1991, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Eisner 1991, Greene 1995, Rose 1990, Sherman and Webb 1991). Some thinkers, including James Giarelli, are now announcing that within the social sciences, "the positivistic experiment is over" (1990, 22). Qualitative research is playing an increasingly significant role in the quest for knowledge in the field of education. And Elliot Eisner has taken a leading role in making the case that "there is no area of human inquiry that epitomizes the qualitative more than what artists do when they work"

(1979, 190). As we enter the twenty-first century, qualitative researchers, philosophers, and artists will have an increasingly strong voice about how we make our way in educational research. We will not, however, ignore what we have learned from the natural sciences outside the field of education. Ongoing brain research is yielding extremely valuable information about human memory systems (Goldman-Rakic 1992; Nadel, Wilmer, and Kurz 1984; Rosenfield 1988), information processing (Liston 1995, Sylwester 1995), the relationship between physiology and psychology (Smilkstein 1993), the relationship between conscious and unconscious perception (Crick and Koch 1992), and the role of emotion in reasoning (Caine and Caine 1995, Keefe 1991). These discoveries have immense implications for teaching and for educational research (Caine and Caine 1995, Kruse 1994, Lazear 1992, Sylwester 1995).

Against this background, we hear philosophers and artists who urge us to look to the humanities for guidance. Among philosophers, the voice of Maxine Greene is both gentle and insistent. In the humanities, she tells us, we find the human complexity that is lacking in the positivist's view of the world. In the arts, we learn paradox, ambiguity, and passion; through the arts, we learn empathy and overcome historical prejudices. The arts, she tells us, lead us to that which is most human in ourselves and make it possible for us to live together in the "common

world" of a democratic society (Greene 1978a, 1988, 1995). For Greene, the arts engage our imaginations and open the doors of the possible. They permit us to imagine how things might be other than they are. That sort of imagination is essential for meaningful change.

In 1890 Emily Dickinson began a now famous poem like this: "I dwell in possibility" (1960, 327). As we look around us at the realities of schools today, we all, whatever our philosophical stance, acknowledge the need for change. There is a great need to "dwell in possibility," to imagine how things might become other than they are. We first must imagine change, before we can make it happen.

What Counts As Research?

In the 1994 edition of *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Laurel Richardson discusses an emergent phenomenon:

In the wake of feminist and postmodernist critiques of traditional qualitative writing practices, qualitative work has been appearing in new forms; genres are blurred, jumbled. (520)

She refers to these new forms as *experimental representations*, and points to their one clear commonality: "the violation of prescribed conventions; they transgress the boundaries of social science writing genres" (1994, 520).

I would point to another commonality: each of these genres represents an intersection of art and research. That

intersection is perhaps most dramatic in the subgroup of experimental genres that Richardson calls evocative representations. These use literary devices "to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses" (1994, 521). This kind of representation, Richardson says, "touches us where we live, in our bodies" (1994, 521). This kind of representation is the central concern of this dissertation.

For a number of years now, Elliot Eisner at Stanford University has been actively exploring--both in print (1979, 1991) and on the programs of professional conferences--the potential role of evocative representation in social science research. Eisner maintains,

There is no area of human inquiry that epitomizes the qualitative more than what artists do when they work. Thus, it seems to me that if we seek to know what qualitative inquiry consists of, we can do little better than analyze the work of those for whom it is a necessary condition.
(1979, 190)

Eisner's concern with artistic modes of representing knowledge grows out of his long-standing investigations of *aesthetic knowing* and *connoisseurship* (Eisner 1979, 1985, 1991). What the connoisseur perceives aesthetically, he or she will need to report in some public form. Research becomes a matter of first perceiving and then "making public the ineffable" (1979, 200). For this task, Eisner maintains that "nothing is more precise than the artistic use of language" (1979, 200).

In Athens, Georgia, at the International Conference on Qualitative Research in Education (1996), Eisner suggested five purposes of research:

1. Enlarge understanding. (Illuminate rather than obscure.)
2. Engender a sense of empathy. (Provide a sense of particularity, making it possible to get inside a world.)
3. Provide for productive ambiguity. (Offer more evocation, less closure. Stimulate multiple plausible interpretations.)
4. Increase the variety of questions we can ask. (Stimulate the capacity to wonder.)
5. Exploit individual aptitudes of researchers. (Tap a wide variety of human intelligences.)

"Yes," he says, if it fulfills these purposes, "a novel ought to count as research" (1996). In *Living The Ethnographic Life* (1990), Mike Rose makes the case that poetry, too, ought to count as a way of representing knowledge. Marcus and Fischer perceived as early as 1986 that we are in an "experimental moment." Though it is neither a novel nor a collection of poems, this dissertation is part of the experiment.

A Statement of the Problem

For most of this century, efforts to understand teachers and classrooms have been based in the concepts that (a) teaching is a science and that (b) educational research must follow the processes and precepts of the natural sciences. Now, we are acknowledging that positivist

descriptions of teaching have been, by their very definition, limited and decontextualized. They have taught us less than we need to know.

During this same period of time, the arts have been marginalized, held apart from the work of both "hard" and "soft" sciences. During a positivist era, there has been no expectation that artists, or persons of artistic inclination, might work productively in other disciplines to produce and encode knowledge. The advent of qualitative research, which shares many of the values of art, has, however, opened new possibilities.

Stated in conventional terms, the problem is one of determining how, in the world of educational research, understanding might be informed and enriched by artistic vision and artistic modes of representation. If teaching is an art full of complexity and nuance, then for examining and understanding the teaching act, we need processes that engage with complexity and nuance. For communicating what we learn from such research, we need modes of representation that have the power to communicate the richness of lived experience.

Valerie J. Janesick is both a trained dancer and a qualitative researcher. In "The Dance of Qualitative Research Design," she examines some of the shared qualities of dance and research and calls for interdisciplinary research efforts that focus on lived experience:

The prevailing myths about aggregating numbers and, more tragically, aggregating individuals into sets of numbers have moved us away from our understanding of lived experience. By using other disciplines, such as art, sociology, history, dance, architecture, and anthropology to inform our research processes, we may broaden our understanding of method and substance. (1994, 215)

"[I]t is time," Janesick tells us, "to return to a discourse on the personal, on what it means to be alive" (1994, 217). This is the larger, deeper problem within which the problem of representation resides. How do we avoid the error of excessive abstraction? How do we stay connected to the human purposes of research? This dissertation is concerned with those questions and with possibilities for modes of representation that help us retain the human dimension in knowledge acquired about teaching through research.

Purpose, Methodology, and Mode of Representation

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to explore and exemplify, simultaneously, what can happen at the intersections of art and research, art and teaching. Purpose, methodology, and mode of representation are closely linked. Instead of separating what I know as a teacher and researcher from what I know as an artist, I am allowing these dimensions to function in concert.

Within the resonance of the broad concerns I have articulated here, this dissertation presents two evocative representations of research on the teaching of poetry and the poetry of teaching. The first examines the experiences

of twelve students in a fifth-year master's program in English education. It follows their growth, examines the issues that became central to their enterprise, and witnesses their building of community. The research report is in the form of a reader's theater script constructed from participants' journals and poems. The second representation follows one of those students through his internship, focusing on how his artistic concerns manifest themselves in his emergent teaching style. The nonchronological narrative report borrows heavily from poetic technique and poetic strategy. Each of these evocative representations is accompanied by its own brief explanation of context, purpose, and methodology. Each retains the visual conventions of its own genre, most notably the use of white space as part of a rhetorical strategy.

Methodologically, the two studies reported here borrow from different qualitative strategies; they may both, nevertheless, be said to fall under the broad rubric of *personal experience methods*. In their discussion of personal experience methods in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Jean D. Clandenin and F. Michael Connelly remind us that

education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined. In its most general sense, when one asks what it means to study education, the answer is to study experience. (1994, 415)

As defined by Clandenin and Connelly, personal experience methods focus on the experiential whole, which is both

temporal and storied. They acknowledge the centrality of the researcher's own experience and the critical role of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Moving from field texts to research texts, the researcher "looks for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across individuals' personal experience" (1994, 423). For each of the pedagogy-focused studies embedded in this dissertation, and for the theoretical study that frames and infuses them, these descriptors of methodology hold true.

CHAPTER 2
EVOCATIVE REPRESENTATIONS: THE FIRST EXEMPLAR

Prologue

The Context and the Problem

For thirteen years I taught English and creative writing in a large, multicultural high school in Texas. During that time, I became increasingly involved with and committed to poetry, and in 1989 I entered the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers. Over time, my experiences with poetry and with the concept of "knowledge in the body" led me to think about parallels between constructing poems and constructing the teaching act.

When I was preparing for the first time to teach a secondary English methods class for preservice teachers, I made it my conscious challenge to bring what I had learned about the making of poems to the task of preparing people to teach English. I was particularly concerned with addressing a widely acknowledged problem in teacher education: all too often, it does not "stick." Teachers leave the university knowing a great deal about research and psychology and effective methods, but if we check on these teachers two or three years later, we are likely to find them teaching not

in the ways they learned at the university, but in the ways they themselves were taught.

As I considered this phenomenon, increasingly I suspected that what preservice teachers needed from teacher education was not only "a body of knowledge," but also "knowledge in the body"--knowledge fully incorporated, in the original sense of the word. When students enter a fifth-year program, they have approximately seventeen years of experience in classrooms, internalized knowledge about what classrooms are like and what teachers do. They have seventeen years, at least, of deeply incorporated *miseducation* about schools and teaching. The problem becomes: What can we do that is powerful enough to counteract this? How can we effect transformations?

Transformation is at the heart of the artist's enterprise. Artistic transformation occurs at several levels--transformation of materials, transformation of the quality of time, and, ultimately, transformation of being and understanding. Every artist hopes to offer the viewer, listener, reader an experience that is potentially transformative. Significant encounters with art do change us, sometimes subtly in ways we hardly recognize, sometimes powerfully at the level of epiphany. After such encounters, we walk away just a little different from who we were before.

I wanted the preservice teachers in my charge to walk away from our encounter at least a little different from who they were before, a little changed in relation to their beliefs about teaching and schools. I wanted to do more than fill their heads with facts that might dissipate into air within a few years, seeming discredited by experiences "in the real world." I wanted them to know best practices, not as a list of research results, but as meaningful experiences they had had, experiences genuine and powerful enough that they would want to enact them for their own students.

I would follow the creative writer's dictum to show, not tell. If I wanted students to know about classrooms in which the teacher's role is de-centered, I would de-center my role. If I wanted them to understand the processes of a writing workshop, we would enact those processes. If I wanted to share with them the potential value of constructing poems, I would engage them in making poems. If I wanted them to know about drawing as a response to literature, we would draw. The immediate goal was experience itself. The long-range goal was enduring transformation--an enriched awareness of what teaching and learning might be, an unshakable sense of possibility.

Notes about Method

In their discussion of personal experience methods, Clandenin and Connelly use the term "field texts" rather

than the quantitative term "data." They note that "some documents that eventually become field texts may have been created prior to the inquiry, or even during the inquiry but for a different purpose" (Clandenin and Connelly 1994, 419). Such was the case for the study reported here. I did not set out with the intention of "doing research" with this methods class. I simply set out to teach. Several of the assignments I gave my students ultimately, however, became field texts. The transformation of these field texts into an evocative representation became a matter of looking for the "patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes [both] within [and] across individuals' personal experience" (Clandenin and Connelly 1994, 419).

During the course of the semester, I asked my methods students to keep journals. My instructions were somewhat unorthodox. I told them that I would never read these journals in their entirety, would never take the journals out of their hands, but at the end of the semester, I would ask them to type out twenty-five pages of material that they chose for me to see. I told them they could write about anything they wanted in these journals, encouraged them not to limit themselves to highly focused writing about becoming teachers. "Just keep a journal of your lives," I said, "during this period of time when you are becoming teachers. Then, at the end of the semester, pull out material that seems relevant. And remember: I will only see what you

choose for me to see." These instructions had some important results. The students often wrote things they had absolutely no intention of letting me see. But, at the end of the semester, when trust was established, they were willing to let me see what they had not intended for me to see. The honesty of what they shared was remarkable.

In another semester-long assignment, each student was asked to construct a handbook in the form of a loose-leaf binder. The handbook would be a collection of materials, articles, quotes, cartoons, poems or whatever seemed personally relevant for the task ahead. "Gather into this notebook whatever is meaningful to you--things you know you want to hang onto to carry with you into the classroom." Each person would organize these materials in whatever way seemed appropriate and would write an introduction to the handbook, making meaning of the contents and of the process of forming the collection.

We also spent considerable time with poets and poetry. We talked about Keats' concept of *negative capability*, which he defined as the ability to dwell in uncertainty, "without irritable reaching after fact and reason" (qtd. in Walker 1992, 1). Keats saw negative capability as a critical capacity for poets. We saw that it might also be critical for teachers; as soon as we become certain of something, we shut down a whole range of possibilities. Teachers need, along with Emily Dickinson, to "dwell in possibility."

Throughout the semester, these students becoming teachers also wrote poems--poems from their personal lives and poems from their classroom experiences. In one instance, I asked them to use poems as a form of research report. Their assignment called for the traditional methods of case study: choose one student to observe closely over time. "Select a student who seems alien to you for some reason," I advised, "someone you feel you don't understand. Watch, listen, take notes, reflect." Instead of producing the usual third person report, however, I asked them to write a poem from the point of view of the person studied. "Write in first person, and incorporate at least one line of speech you actually heard from this student."

Ultimately, the journals, the handbook introductions, and the poems became field texts. From these texts, the reader's theater script which follows, "Poetry and Passion in Teacher Education: Personalizing and Internalizing Knowledge," was constructed. This script includes no interspersed narration or explication--only the students' exact words, written at the time, and later pieced together in somewhat the fashion of a found poem.

Construction of the Script

Although there are now computer programs for managing qualitative data, I worked in the original tradition. The process was visual and physical. It began on the living room floor. I cut copies of the journal entries and

handbook introductions into strips, color coding each strip to indicate its author, and organized the coded strips into piles representing themes, concerns, or events: uncertainty, racism, community building, or the NCIE convention, for example. Then I began weaving the script from the voices that literally surrounded me.

There were a number of artistic challenges. I wanted to be sure that each voice was heard and that each voice was distinct. I wanted the script to tell a number of individual stories and simultaneously tell a collective story. I also had to solve the problem of my own presence in the text. I would not "speak" in the script, but to eliminate my presence completely would be inappropriate. I was very much a part of the experience that is the subject of the script, and to leave myself out would be to falsify. In fact, I hoped that part of the message of the script, for an audience of teacher educators, would be: there are things we can do to facilitate transformation. If I took myself out of the picture, I eliminated the possibility of that message. Clifford Geertz (1988) suggests that the dilemma of figuring out how to be in the text is one of the most difficult with which a writer of qualitative research must grapple. I found that to be true. Ultimately, I decided to allow into the script a few, as few as possible, of the students' references to my role in the process--just enough to remind the audience that I was there and to

suggest that, like the others represented in the script, I had a role to play in the community we became.

There was also a problem in relation to structuring time. During the course of the semester, these students had actually had two different practicum experiences, one immediately after the other, but the presentation of two separate segments on the practicum proved awkward and artistically redundant. I collapsed the two practicums into a single segment focusing on classroom experiences.

The weaving of poems into the script became problematic as well. The poems written from research were, by assignment, in first person from the point of view of the young persons studied. The script was in first person from the point of view of preinterns. Ultimately, of the case-study poems, I was only able to use the ones written by Shelley Scholl, who had negotiated with me a variation on the assignment. Instead of one poem incorporating the point of view of one student, she wanted to do a series of vignettes about every member of one class. These short pieces wove nicely into the fabric of the script. Other poems included in the script were written for other purposes.

The script grew slowly by painstaking, nonlinear accretion as I grappled with problems and tried to balance themes and voices. About midway in the process, students began volunteering to assist. One, two, or three at a time

would come to help me sift through the piles of strips and place them in significant juxtapositions. We would read and re-read, decide where there needed to be more or less substantiation of a concept, where the pace needed to be speeded up or slowed down, where voices needed to echo or contrast, always working toward something that "felt" like an accurate representation of the experience we had shared. Sometimes, a volunteer would be reading through a theme-related stack and would remember, "You know, I didn't type it out and turn it in, but I have something in my journal that really fits with this. I'll bring it to you." Sometimes, the recollection would be of a text another student had written but that did not seem to be in our resources. "I'll ask her about it and see if it would be okay to use it." In this way, the bank of field texts continued to expand.

When there was finally a complete first draft, the entire group gathered for a read-through. During the read-through, each person made notes on his or her copy of the script. Afterward, we did some oral processing. There were differences of opinion. For example, knowing that we would be performing the script for a professional audience within a few months, a few were uncomfortable with the inclusion of profane language in several journal excerpts. Some felt that it was appropriate because it was an accurate representation of the speaker's alienation at that point,

and it provided a striking contrast to how he felt and how he spoke later. Others remained uncomfortable. Ultimately, I would have to weigh these arguments and decide. In this case, I found a middle ground, trimming profane utterances to a bare minimum for accomplishing what I considered to be a valid purpose from the perspectives of both art and research.

At the end of the read-through session, they gave me their annotated scripts to take home and use in the ongoing revision. Volunteers continued to check in on the process. Later, upon a read-through of the significantly revised second draft, the group judged it acceptable, pending a few small adjustments.

This kind of group checking provided what Eisner refers to as "structural corroboration," one way of assessing the validity of an evocative representation: "Structural corroboration is the term I use to describe the confluence of multiple sources of evidence or the recurrence of instances that support a conclusion. In many evaluation circles it is called *triangulation*" (1991, 55). To a large extent, the journal texts themselves provided structural corroboration; the additional direct involvement of participants strengthened assurances of validity.

An Ethical Concern/The Issue of Voice and Ownership

Traditionally, and for good reason, researchers substitute pseudonyms for the names of participants in a

project. Protection of anonymity is usually a primary ethical concern. This project is different. The participants in this study have already publicly claimed the texts they contributed to the final report. They have performed this script twice for professional audiences. They are proud to be represented by their own words and to assist in the communication of their individual and collective experience. They do not want to be anonymous and have indicated that they would be seriously offended if I rendered them anonymous at this point. Their names are Elena Agar, Charline Burgess, Calvin Dillon, Jennifer Gude, Kevin Kendall, Robin Lee, Natalie Milian, Joe Recchi, Shelley Scholl, Marc Sokol, Julie Welch, and Emily Zellner.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study of preservice teachers is "to inscribe a present--to convey in words 'what it is like' to be somewhere specific in the lifeline of the world" (Geertz 1988, 143). In this case, we focus on the lifelines of twelve teachers at the beginnings of their careers. We follow them on a journey from uncertainty, isolation, and naïveté to confidence, community, and awareness. The purpose is to "connect with fundamentally human qualities" of their experience (Clandenin and Connelly 1994, 425). In doing so, this study intends to raise questions about the very nature of teacher education--not to propose definitive answers or to demonstrate unequivocal cause and effect, but

rather to suggest possibilities and to stimulate imaginative thinking in relation to teacher education.

This study wonders, along with Maxine Greene, "whether we are distancing teachers from their actual bodies and asking them to treat themselves (as well as their students) as information machines" (1986, 70). It proposes, along with her, that we need to "move the young to take consciously critical and cognitive action with regard to their lived worlds" (Greene 1986, 78) and that doing so requires passionate engagement.

Poetry and Passion in Teacher Education:
Personalizing and Internalizing Knowledge

In the beginning . . .

- Robin: What in the world am I doing here?
- Emily: I'm so nervous. What if I can't do it?
- Julie: There's so much I don't know about literature and the English language--and I'm supposed to teach it?!
- Nathalie: I feel really lost.
- Jenny: We sat in this room, and they divided a list of the English PROTEACH people into two halves for our Methods classes. They literally tore our names apart and put us into two piles. Then my half (this half) went to another room with this woman named Anne Sullivan.
- Shelley: It's hard for me to keep answering this Why-I-decided-to-become-a-teacher question. I don't have a hard and fast, clear-cut, idealistic response. It's not like teaching was some kind of lifelong dream for me.
- Nathalie: I really don't know what type of teacher I'm going to be.
- Jenny: There are actually guys in our class. I always thought guys were all but obsolete in teaching English.
- Kevin: I'm a little worried about being in an education program. I've heard so much that suggests it might not be rigorous or challenging enough. I don't like to be bored. Especially when there's so much that's important about education.

Nathalie: I have all these great ideas in my head, but I don't know what will happen in the classroom.

Elena: I have so much to learn!

Jenny: Most of the people I know who came to college have changed majors several times, but I still haven't found anything that seems more appealing to me than teaching. Except for sixth grade, when I wanted to be a marine biologist, I have always wanted to be a teacher.

Calvin: God, I hated high school! Why in the hell am I doing this? Why would I want to spend the rest of my life in a place that was nothing but pain for me?

Shelley: My instincts tell me this is where I belong. How stupid is that?

Elena: I can use all the tips for teaching I can find.

Charline: Answers, I wish I had all the answers.

Emily: I am such a dork. We didn't have class today, and I went anyway.

Joe: I have to keep a journal? Angst in black and white.

Shelley: I'm really glad someone is forcing me to keep this free-form kind of journal, because it removes a lot of my constraints about the undertaking. I never want to write anything down unless I feel like it's "profound"--even though I know the profound may very well arise from something ordinary.

Emily: I've got to remember to write in this journal. I am just not a journal writer. I was going to do an oral journal, but decided it would be cheating, so I've resigned myself to the old traditional one.

Marc: This class so far doesn't feel competitive. It's more team-oriented than I expected. There's a nice feeling of companionship. This is a new experience, unique to me so far in my college career. I'm sure I need this for now, until I am ready to go off on my own in front of a high school class.

- Calvin: I don't really know anybody in this stupid class except for Kevin. I think I get along with him because we're both kinda dorky. That's probably what attracts me to Joe, too. I used to be the same way, hiding behind five dollar words so I didn't really have to say anything. I don't know about Marc. I can't really figure him out. I've never had much of a connection with frat guys, but that's probably just the dork in me being jealous of beautiful people who seem to be together.
- Kevin: What bothered me about being a journalist was always being alone. But I may be alone here, too.
- Calvin: I had a good time talking to Nathalie and Emily, but I feel like I make them nervous. I don't really know Robin or Charline or Tasha or Shelley (my God this is a long list) or Elena or Julie at all. I don't really feel a part of this group. They seem to be optimistic, which I read somewhere is a common personality trait of teachers. Maybe I need to get out before I do any real damage.
- Robin: PROTEACH is making me think. For the first time after all those education classes, I am actually thinking about what I want to do in my classroom.
- Charline: I had to teach a short story introduction last week. I was terrified, but I did okay.
- Emily: I think I'm going to do a creative writing assignment. I've found a good piece that I can read as an example, and I'll let everyone else do their own. As nervous as I get when we have to stand up and attempt to teach, I really am glad that we are doing it now and not waiting until our internship.
- Joe: We've only convened four times, and I'm already going to have to teach my second mini-lesson. I think before I approach this one, I'm going to have to take my memories of the last lesson and give them a formal cremation. I don't use the word debacle often, but . . . Sheesh! I was too nervous, too self conscious.
- Elena: Teaching takes up so much creativity.
- Shelley: I presented my writing stimulus to the methods class today, and now I'm at home obsessing about it. Basically, I'm mad at myself for wanting, in a sense, to show off. I don't want to turn into

the kind of show-off, know-it-all kind of person that I and everyone else hate to be around. I'm so damned hyper-aware of my need for approval and acceptance.

Emily: Shelley's idea with the paint samples for "The Yellow Wallpaper" was great. Not only was it creative, but the kids get to take something home. I've always wondered why once you get to high school, you stop creating things to take home and show your parents.

Nathalie: Am I going to be able to do such wonderful and exciting things like everyone else? I don't know if I can pump out original ideas from my head every day.

Emily: I'm nervous about my presentation today in class.

Marc: It's a good experience to learn from peers, from their good points and their mistakes, because we have all been there and are hopefully all striving for the same goal, to become good teachers.

Joe: The blond guy (I think his name is Kevin) was kind of helpful. His advice was sincere and well-taken, I thought.

Calvin: I dunno. What the hell am I going to do if I can't stand in front of a group of people without sounding like a babbling, mumbling reject from a bad Woody Allen movie? Everybody looked so confused! If I can't form a coherent thought or explain what I mean to a bunch of grad students, how can I possibly hope to make any kind of a connection with high schoolers? -- I know! I could teach correspondence courses.

Joe: I got it! I'm going to bring a doctor's note exempting me from teaching any more. I've got asthma and can't stand up and talk to a lot of people for long periods of time.

Nathalie: Teaching is really hard.

Robin: My class will not be bored by literature.

Marc: I want my students to realize that literature is not some dead knowledge they must learn, analyze, and understand. It is, in fact, living, changing, and surrounding their daily lives.

Charline: I want them to know that there is no one meaning of what they read, and how they interpret is an integral part of their personality.

Emily: If there is one area where I really hope not to fail my students, it is a combination of the emotional and social. I don't think that I'll fail them intellectually. I really think that I'll be able to teach them if I don't fail them by alienating them. I believe that teachers who fail their students intellectually are often the ones who have alienated students and created an atmosphere in which students don't believe in themselves or their teacher.

Robin: I don't think I could stand to be the teacher society conceives of: boring, unintelligent, unchallenged, unchallenging.

Joe: I want my students to be interested, and I don't want to teach them something I don't want to teach them!

Robin: I know I want to inspire and liberate and empower and unfold, but do I really want to be a teacher?

Anybody: Maybe this isn't for me.

Anybody: Maybe this isn't for me.

All: Maybe this isn't for me.

Calvin: It pisses me off that the only real writing that I did in high school happened outside of the classroom. I know I want my classroom to be different. I just feel like I can't be a Nancie Atwell or an Anne fucking Sullivan.

Charline: Today is the first time I am doubting my choice of profession (in a really nagging sort of way). What does all this mean?

Elena: How can I connect the real world with school?

Charline: I watched "The Good Son" tonight with Macauley Culkin. Are there really "evil" kids, and what do I do if I get one in my classes?

Elena: How can I create a comfortable atmosphere for my students?

Charline: What happens if you get a student in your class that you really don't like? How do you deal with that?

Elena: What am I going to do if there is a special ed student in my classroom? LEP?--fine. Special ed?--help!

Charline: What is all this about ending a sentence with a preposition or not? Do you use "with which" before the subject or at the end just use "with?"

Jenny: I plodded through a lot of abstract undergraduate education classes and literary criticism classes to get to where I can apply any of it to what I want to do. Now that I'm here, I am clueless about HOW I will teach kids.

Charline: How do you decide what kids read?

Emily: What if I screw up?

Elena: Is everyone else having such a hard time?

Charline: How do you imagine properly?

Julie: I gave my writing prompt in class today, and it didn't go well. I made a fool out of myself. I completely blanked out. A huge void filled my brain due to extreme nervousness, and the next thing I know, I'm sitting down. But I got back up after a couple of minutes. My classmates were supportive, but I'm really embarrassed.

Calvin: I want so much to be natural. I want to be the kind of teacher who listens and talks and reads and writes with his students and helps them to live and think deeply.

Charline: I want my students to feel like they can go anywhere and that they are seeing and experiencing other parts of the world through reading, writing, and the things they do in my classroom.

Marc: I feel among good friends here--maybe even family within this group. Everyone is going through a similar experience, and we draw off each other for support and encouragement.

- Jenny: We all went to Market Street Pub Thursday night. We had a great time. I think we're going to make it a Thursday night tradition. It's nice to be friends with people in classes finally. I guess it's true that you have the most fun at school in kindergarten and in graduate school.
- Julie: At Market Street, I talked to people from my class about my writing prompt screw-up. Elena said,
- Elena: It was bound to happen to someone and I thought that someone was going to be me.
- Julie: I don't think they think I'm such an airhead after all.
- Calvin: Wow. I talked to Anne in her office yesterday, and then I went to Market Street last night. I need to really start working on stuff for this class. I mean, I'm keeping up, but that's not what this woman is about.
- Charline: Wow. It seems to be my favorite word lately. I am reading Seeking Diversity, and I keep getting lumps in my throat and tears in my eyes when I read the stories and the student writing.
- Calvin: I really like Rief and Atwell. Their stuff works because they quit listening to what they thought they were saying and doing and started to really pay attention. They stepped back and created a physical and philosophical environment that fostered real writing.
- Emily: I think that in order to learn, students have to believe in themselves and their teachers. I have had teachers that had so much confidence in me that they made me have confidence in myself. It was those teachers that I learned the most from.
- Calvin: Kids need to have time to feel their own way and listen to themselves and listen to others.
- Charline: I loved the English Journal. This was written in plain English, and enjoyable English, and it was funny, and it made me cry, and it made me talk back to it.
- Julie: I found an article on gender-balanced curriculum. Margaret Anne Zeller Carlson gives practical advice on how to make sure women's voices are heard. I will look back at this often.

Shelley: Most of the articles I'm reading are by women. I am grateful to hear a bunch of women's voices, voices I can respect and admire, a lucky accident of professional choice.

Marc: I found an article dealing with sexual stereotyping in literature. Barbara Pace opened my eyes. Now I'm seeing this kind of stereotyping in literature and in daily life.

Charline: At first, I thought article reading was going to be a dry experience. Even though I thought I knew I wanted to teach, I still had that memory of RESEARCH and dreaded JOURNAL READING in my head. I kept envisioning boring psychological patterning articles about how bad kids were. Boy, was I ever pleasantly surprised.

Marc: Class discussions and these articles are teaching me that as English teachers, we cannot search for and emphasize set meanings in literature. We have to be open to other interpretations students may have, and respect and validate these opinions.

Joe: These articles are showing me that Tom Romano and Linda Christensen and countless others have "broken the rules" in their classrooms, choosing their students' voices and clear, honest, free expression over the correct use of commas and "whom."

Charline: I really am liking our textbook. Making the Journey, by Leila Christenbury.

Calvin: I decided to use "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll to teach the class the role of syntax in determining part of speech. "Jabberwocky" is the only poem I know in entirety by heart. . . . So, I opened with a joke to get over being nervous. Then I took two big steps forward (figuratively and physically) and recited in an uncharacteristically audible voice, the first stanza of the poem. They all heard me, and I felt good for the first time about sharing something in front of a group. Maybe I just need to be more myself and less who I think I'm supposed to be.

Jenny: We had to write a poem in only five minutes, and tomorrow Anne will read them out loud! I'm terrified!

- Elena: I tried to write a poem about what happened Thursday night and all the nights like it. I couldn't. It's painful. I can't do a poem.
- Emily: I never write poetry, so I'm really hesitant and unsure about my work.
- Jenny: I was SO nervous to have my work read. It felt so unfinished when I left class and turned my poem in yesterday. The whole time my poem was being discussed, I had to really try not to giggle. I was embarrassed, even though nobody knew who wrote it. The thing is, people seemed to really like some of the things I had written. There may actually be a writer inside me!
- Charline: That was a really neat feeling to have people react positively to my work.
- Joe: It's important to make helpful comments that are actually helpful, comments that empower and reinforce, rather than simply indicating what someone didn't do or shouldn't have done.
- Calvin: I'm perfectly aware in my life of the things that I do wrong; it's knowing that there is the possibility for an alternative that helps you to grow and change.
- Shelley: I am always thankful that we have the sort of flexible classroom and curriculum that we do--especially because so much real communication and connection happen.
- Jenny: First field experience starts tomorrow. Calvin and I are placed together at a middle school.
- Nathalie: I am terrified about tomorrow.
- Jenny: Tomorrow is my first day as Ms. Gude.

The Practicum

All: [Softly, warily] Let the games [pause] begin.

Robin: Now I am the authority. How frightening.

Nathalie: I stand before the mirror,
a cheap one from Walmart.
I don't like what I see--
a nervous girl,
dressed up in her mother's clothing.
Too young to look this old.

I am terrified.

Marc: It was weird how the kids looked at us as adults,
having no idea we were actually very nervous
inside.

Joe: I still sit too close to the TV, Indian style. I
still go to Toys-R-Us and want stuff. I still buy
cereal with prizes at the bottom.

Jenny: We got to school at 7:45 this morning and Dr.
Wright told us to get here at 8:20! Calvin and I
sat in the car until 8:10, carefully watching the
clock and looking around until we thought it was
late enough to actually be here.

Marc: "Mr. Sokol" is going to be hard to get used to.

Nathalie: I like a big high school with lots of diversity
and lots of things going on. I liked not being
able to walk down the hallways because all the
kids are blocking the walkway.

Elena: My class seems like it's going to be good. I'm
excited.

Nathalie: Jeremy was a wonderful discovery. I was once
Jeremy, but not as bad. I was cocky, arrogant,
obnoxious and defensive in high school. It was
wonderful to look at myself through my newly
formed teacher's eyes. I hope I can take down the
masks of my own arrogant students when the time
comes.

Robin: I think I just have to get used to the class, and
the school, and standing up in front of them, and
somehow, I need to get their respect. Once I have
all that, whether it takes me a year or just a

month of internship, I know the sick feeling will go away.

Marc: In the ninth-grade honors class, seats were limited, so Joe sat with the students.

Joe: I took a seat in the back of the room, trying desperately to blend in.

Marc: As unprofessional as it was, I could not help but laugh seeing 22-year-old Joe sitting with a bunch of 14-year-olds.

Joe: I'm betting that the Oleg Cassini tie was a dead giveaway.

Elena: I feel stupid. I couldn't figure out how to open the pencil sharpener. You have to push some confangled new-age thing at the back. Geez.

Emily: I can already tell that Dr. Carroll has a great rapport with his kids. They all listen (which I think is rare for middle school) and stop talking without him having to stop teaching. A few of the students even came up and hugged him because he had been away at a conference and they had missed him. It was nice to see.

Kevin: I think I'm going to like Mrs. Harrell a lot. She reminds me very much of Ms. Allison, one of my favorite high school teachers. She just seems to be bursting with energy.

Emily: The fact that he was at a conference this week and is going to another next weekend says good things about him. It sounds like he's not one of those teachers who forget about learning new things once they have a job. I hope I never get to that point.

Marc: By the end of the first class, I had gone through my first three days of lesson plans.

Julie: The first day, we simply observed the two class periods, but on the second day and throughout the week, we began to walk around the room and help those who needed us.

Charline: Glenney, came to school today with a sign stapled to his backpack: WILL WORK FOR HALF OF FOOD STAMPS. I think he meant half of your food

stamps. I think, in some way, we got to him yesterday. He responded.

Marc: I've had a disturbing insight--the tremendous number of students some teachers have. Mrs. Pitts has 150 middle schoolers. I don't know how she does it!

Shelley: One boy, who wrote about the Cyclops, spelled the plural C-y-c-l-o-p-e-s. I had to look it up. It was right, but the teacher came and immediately circled the first incidence of the plural, saying, "Cyclops has no e." So I said, "That's what I thought, but I looked it up, and it was the correct plural form." So she says, "Oh, I don't believe this student would know that," and she sticks a question mark over it. So I was bad and rebelled. After she walked away, I went back and wrote, "Great use of really strange plural form!"

Charline: I learned a lot about what not to do in the classroom--yell at them to try to make them stop talking; always make them stay in their desks; ridicule them to teach them a lesson; and constantly correct grammar, spelling, and conventions without touching on content.

Jenny: Instead of spending half a class doing worksheets, they could be doing a lot more writing!

Julie: When a student asked me to read her paper, I didn't go through and mark all the misspellings and grammar mistakes. I first told her what I liked about her story and pointed to sentences that were especially telling. I then asked her about a couple of words or sentences that I was confused about. . . . She appreciated it, and I felt better about helping her with content instead of marking every grammatical mistake.

Joe: Dear Abbey, I've been heavily in to drugs for over a year now and have no one to turn to. 'Desperate.'

Dear Desperate, "Into" is one word, and you should avoid ending sentences with a preposition. Good luck.

Robin: I have the urge to take over now, to offer to do this or that, run things in the class, but I have to remind myself to hold back until I can have

complete control, and until I have all the names down.

Nathalie: All the kids were standing up, talking, not doing their work. It was complete chaos. I had to tell them, "I expect all of you to sit down and stop talking." I said it calmly and quietly, but they all heard me. Immediately, they sat down and started listening! What a sense of power!

Emily: I'm in a sixth-grade reading-writing workshop. At first I really thought it was unorganized and crazy, but as the days went by, I began to realize that there was a specific order to things.

Julie: I'm enjoying helping writers strengthen their attention to detail. I ask them questions like "What did her voice sound like?" "What did the pizza taste like?"

Shelley: Girls don't make noise in these classes. I hate that. It's like they're nothing but an audience for the boys.

Elena: I definitely noticed how the boys in the classroom completely dominate it. I see the silent girl phenomenon occurring.

Shelley: Adrian pats the round percussion of her belly with cautious palms, absorbed in rhythmic dialogue with the kicking becoming inside. Smoothing the cover of *The Little Prince*, she tells us, "This is the first book I ever wanted to read twice."

Robin: I want so much for them. I hope I do them justice.

Shelley: I think the hardest part about teaching may be how much you have to give of yourself to the students. It's like they suck the life right out of you, even though they're bursting with more life than they know what to do with. I'm hungry.

Julie: I sure was exhausted afterwards--and hungry! Standing on your feet for two hours straight in front of teenagers really makes you burn some energy.

Marc: I decided to battle the chronic dry-mouth syndrome with a glass of water, only I forgot and left it

in the teacher's lounge. I asked another teacher when the dry-mouth experience would stop. He said, "Probably when you stop teaching." I guess I'll have to get used to it.

Kevin: "Today, we're following Mr. Kendall's directions," she said. But when I put up the samples I had created to respond to each of the two writing prompts, I realized that in my cutting and pasting, I had cut off the last part of the first piece. ALWAYS PROOFREAD YOUR OVERHEADS, DIMWIT!

Calvin: I don't know what happened today. The writing prompt just flopped. It really sounded good on paper in that book--"Write about a time when your expectations weren't met." I thought they could be thoughtful and have fun. But the kids were bored, and I had a hard time keeping them on task.

Nathalie: Christenbury was right: Working with teenagers is not easy.

Calvin: When we got in the car, I was whining to Jenny about what a shitty job I did so she would tell me I did okay, but then she turned it around on me:

Jenny: I think you need to ask yourself why you want to be a teacher, Calvin.

Calvin: I didn't really have an answer. So I said something sarcastic. But as I sat in class later, chewing the cud of the day's events, I kept coming back to that question. I realized that I have no idea why I want to teach. That scares me.

Charline: Josh, a quiet white boy in jeans, boots, and flannel shirts every day, was passed by. He was so unobtrusive and he did his work and we forgot about him. I think he is something I need to think about a lot more--Josh and the other students like him.

Shelley: Silent in the corner,
Luke Pennington
stares down at his boot toes,
out the window,
sketches vultures,
wishes he were
anybody else.

Robin: If I can appeal to him, everything else will fall naturally into place. He is listening all along

and just waiting for something that actually applies to him.

Marc: I looked up and saw Bobby eagerly awaiting my attention. "Here's my letter, Mr. Sokol. I put a stamp on it yesterday. Can I send it now?" He had made all his corrections; it was ready. After class, I asked Mrs. Pitts about Bobby, told her how pleased I was about his enthusiasm. She told me that he was one to watch out for--on probation at 13 for setting a house on fire. She was surprised at his cooperation; this was the first assignment he'd seemed interested in.

Elena: If a teacher wants to be a teacher, she has to see the good in her students.

Shelley: Anzaveain couldn't spell his name till eighth grade.

"Are you going to college next year?"

"No. I'm just going to stay in Alachua and be a thug."

Marc: I keep thinking about Bobby. I had met him as my student, and interacted with him on the basis of what I observed of him. If I had known about his past, would things have been different? Would I have tried as hard as I did to engage him? Would I have given him the benefit of the doubt?

Shelley: Anzaveain complains because he can't decipher Chuck's handwriting on the worksheet he is copying.

"I'm going to major in chemistry, and blow up the world."

"Will you call and warn me first?"

"Sure. I'll give you thirty days notice."

Anzaveain, headed for a football scholarship.

Kevin: One kid, and I'm trying hard not to stereotype, but all the worst of a cocky football player, just sat there the whole time doing nothing. . . . He told me he was working on myths. I said, "Great, what myth?" He said, "David and Goliath?" I said, "Well, how about putting your hands on a Bible and re-reading the story?" "They don't have Bibles in schools," he said.

Julie: You have to be quick on your feet in teaching!

Kevin: I know I studied the Bible as literature in ninth grade . . . Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge, apples, serpents . . . I thought that for sure in Florida--the book-banning capital of the world--they would at least be fighting tooth and nail to keep the Bible on the shelf.

So I said, Mickey, I'm pretty sure it's a biblical story, and I'm also pretty sure that they keep Bibles on the shelves of the library." How else did I check all those biblical references in Milton? Maybe college libraries are different from high school libraries? Why is it that you're always so confident before they start asking you questions?

Shelley: Karen holds her breath each night,
holds Clay in the swaying single-wide,
fingers her engagement ring
and prays for eighteen.

Calvin: I like tilting at windmills. There is definitely something compelling about a futile task. If it fails, you always have the improbability of success to blame instead of yourself for trying in the first place.

Robin: I think this practicum is making me crazy.

Calvin: I don't want teaching to be a futile task, but I wonder when I look in my mind's eye at everything that I did wrong today when I was trying to be so right, that I shouldn't just hang it up and go back to working full time at Micrographics. At least I would have the comfort of knowing that I could do well what I was getting paid to do. Of course, a monkey with a prefrontal lobotomy could probably do my job there.

Kevin: I can't believe I was late today of all days. Here I spend all night trying to get the prompt like I want it and roll around in bed wondering if I did it right, and then I miss the first ten minutes when they usually do the journal writing. I should know better than to mess with Mondays.

Emily: Today is one of those days that I really feel out of focus.

- Elena: Tomorrow will be different.
- Jenny: One of my kids was kidding around in class, playing like he was going to hit me. He did!
- Emily: I can't believe this kid just grabbed my ass!
- Nathalie: It's so scary! I feel that all I can do is manage a class. Teaching is a secondary concern. How will I be able to teach after all this management!
- Kevin: They don't like to write and talking is their way of resisting. But they have so many important things to say. Why can't they translate those oral skills to writing? I need more than three weeks to figure that one out.
- Charline: Will I always be nervous in front of my students?
- Elena: I still haven't thought about any "deep" issues about school. I don't think I'm sane enough to.
- Marc: For the second day in a row, we had to go back to school to search for materials Joe left on top of the car when we drove off. When we got there, a team of construction workers was combing the street and parking lot for hundreds of pages, everywhere.
- Elena: Ran out of gas. Again. I think this shows how stressed I am.
- Robin: I think I have finally become disillusioned.
- Calvin: It's got to get better than this.
- Kevin: I had them write about their personal dragons. Based on what I saw in class, I thought the writing would be a disaster, but when I started reading the papers tonight, there were some really interesting pieces--some great slang dialogues.
- Robin: Al is a student in my placement that I feel a great tenderness toward.
- Kevin: Their personal dragons included laziness, depression, confusion, and anger.
- Charline: How valuable it would be to allow kids time to express what they're feeling and getting out of life!

Shelley: Pale and deliberate
in the kind of dress
that advertises limbs,
she bares her fangs.

"Do I look like a child to you?"

[Emily], moving fast
to surpass fast sisters,
crashes forward, speaks
in a voice too old,
with a knowing too certain:

"I lost my creativity
somewhere in adolescence."

Robin: When I asked him if he had been drawing lately, he quickly straightened up and said earnestly, "NO, no, no ma'am!" He thought I was trying to catch him in the act. I will show him that teachers sometimes want to see you do what you are good at.

Jenny: These kids are teaching me wonderful stuff.

Elena: A lot of my preconceptions about "honors" kids and "regular" kids have changed. I can't stand those labels any more. My best experiences were with the regular class, while my worst were with the honors.

Robin: I am getting ideas of what it will be like to have these kids waiting for me to make the first move, and most important, I am beginning to feel like I will be able to do it.

Marc: Teaching, at this point, seems easier if you try to be yourself and not some know-it-all, or ideal teacher. If this profession allows me to really be myself, and enjoy my work at the same time, then I will love it.

Charline: I'll get there. And I'm not so sure I have to be so big and bad and grown up. I just have to be sensitive to my students' and my own needs and to be able to develop trust.

Julie: Oh, Amanda! I wanted to hug you when I saw the tears streaming down your face, but "professional ethics" kept me from doing so. I tried to comfort you as best I could--believe me, I've been there. I know how frustrating it is when the words you want to write won't come out, and even if they

would, you're not sure if you should make such family secrets public.

I've been told that I probably shouldn't have put my hands on your shoulders. How could I not? It's my nature. I do it to everyone I care about.

Elena: A teacher is such a powerful presence in a student's life. It is important not to abuse that power.

Jenny: There were times when I wondered, "What right or business do I have trying to teach anybody anything?" Now I know I do have that right, and I believe I can be effective.

Charline: Their creativity is wonderful and mind blowing.

Joe: I had them write self portraits. I told them I would read them out loud, and "As soon as you think you know who it is, raise your hand." Out to today, T minus no minutes to payoff. I'm in a chair at the front, with twenty portraits in my clutches. I begin reading. The writing is great, and I'm getting caught up in it. I become distracted by sounds of restlessness. Looking up, I witness twelve or thirteen hands shot up in the air, accompanied by lots of "Oooh ooh--I know"'s. I felt like I had arrived at my own surprise party.

Nathalie: I hope, I wish that someone tells Matt how outrageously talented he is. He can rap, he can rhyme, he can draw. Creativity is rolling off him.

Julie: I ran into Glenn today at the projects when I went to pick up Sharae. I said "Hi," and he asked how I knew Sharae. I could tell from their exchanged glances that they disliked one another. Rae told me as we drove away that he was always "up to no good" and would "end up in jail real soon."

Will I be able to have enough of an influence to keep my students from being another crime statistic? I can't just sit by as more and more young people lose hope and trash their futures. I will be an advocate for our kids as well as a teacher.

Charline: I've tried to understand what it's like to be 14 and in this world. I've reflected back on what I've done in my past and how my education fits into all of it. I've learned that because I was in a white-collar school, maybe I don't know how to connect with non-college-bound students. Does that make sense? I feel like I want to work in a school where the majority of students are work-force bound, but what do I have to offer them? What?

Shelley: Stephen's left leg
juts a leaden semiarabesque
into the aisle between the desks;
Cheek pressed against the unread text,
he dreams of his future.

Robin: The practicum is terrific. I am comfortable in front of the class, and I am learning that the management (getting their attention) is possible. I really enjoy the banter before and after class (with the kids) and I enjoy their excitement (it is contagious). I even enjoy the challenge of unmotivated students. I think I made the right choice, teaching.

Kevin: Today was a good day.

Calvin: I led the class in a choral reading, starting with me, of a letter written by a convict who submitted it to their school paper. He wrote the letter to convince young people not to get involved in violence and guns. We made it through that okay. No one felt forced to read and they helped each other with words that they weren't familiar with.

After the reading, I asked them questions to help them think about the elements of the letter that were really persuasive. We talked about his use of personal experience and his conversational voice.

Jenny: Talk less; listen more.

Calvin: On the same page as the letter from the convict, there was a poll of students concerning violence in the schools. "Mr. Dillon, can we read this, too?" Yeah, right, like I would ever tell a student not to read something in my class.

Nathalie: Answer less; question more.

Calvin: I asked the students if the newspaper had polled them. When they said no, we went together through the poll, which had questions like, "do you know someone who brings a weapon to school? Do you know someone who has died because of violence?" I was shocked at how many of them answered yes to questions like these, and I told them so.

Jenny: Talk less.

Calvin: Then the discussion became much more animated, and I didn't interject much at all into the conversation developing around me. Then they started to share personal stories about violence in the school and in their lives.

Jenny: Listen.

Calvin: When Amanda told us about her uncle getting shot, I was paying attention to what she was saying; then I looked around the room. Up to that point there had been so many sideline conversations and notes being passed that I gave up on trying to control. As Amanda told the story, though, all the talking stopped, and even the most disruptive and alienated kids were giving her their complete attention.

Charline: I hope I never stop wanting to do lessons like this.

Calvin: When she finished, I let everyone experience the quiet for a minute and then I said something like, "Listen, guys. Listen how quiet it is. You were all really listening to her tell her story. THAT's what you need to do with your letters. Put as much of yourself and your experiences into your letters as you can. Then your readers will give you the kind of attention you just gave Amanda."

Charline: Just sit--and soak in the silence. Take it all in. Soak it all up.

Calvin: I'd read about teachable moments in Christenbury and in journal articles, but I never thought I'd have one myself.

Robin: The practicum is over.

Emily: I didn't think I would like middle school. I thought the kids would drive me crazy and the

subject matter would really bore me, but I was wrong.

Kevin: I really liked the kids, but they wore me out. And that was with only two classes for only three weeks. How would I get through a full year with 150?

Robin: I learned more in these three weeks than I have learned in fifteen hours of education courses.

Growing Deeper

Charline: Everyone's American dream is different. I could write volumes and volumes on students and their differences. They are all so neat and unique. I am jealous of them--no, not jealous, envious.

Nathalie: I grew up as a Cuban in Miami. During high school, there was a big division between Cubans and Americans, but since I looked "American" with my pale skin and blue eyes, I became an American at school.

Elena: Today some of my students asked me, "What's in you? What's in you?" I must have had a really weird look on my face as they waited for my answer. Finally, one of the girls said (with some irritation), "You look different. What's in you?"

Ohh! I then rattled off the races that were "in me." They seemed impressed that such a white girl could be so . . . unwhite!

Nathalie: My mom laughs at me whenever I want to know about Cuba. She tells me stories, but Cuba seems so far away, so ancient and mysterious.

Kevin: "The courage to go inside and see who I am really"--that does take a lot of courage--it's dangerous to figure out who you really are--to admit the faults that you hide from others. And isn't that what racism attempts to mask in the first place? Isn't racism used as a tool to make yourself feel superior to someone else? What a shallow way to establish self-esteem.

Nathalie: I always picture my family in their beach house, my grandpa with his moustache and straw hat, chickens running around the yard. I wish I knew Cuba, the Cuba Abuelo knew and still loves, the Cuba that created my mom and Tia.

Kevin: That day in class, when I started talking about going in myself and started asking my questions about racism, I heard "uh huh" and "that's good" and "that's right" softly spoken throughout the class. I saw a few eyebrows raised in thought. I paid special attention to the black faces in the room. I hope that wasn't too noticeable, but I am concerned with whether I come across as real to the black students. I am deeply committed to

improving race relations and to improving communication across racial lines.

Robin: For the Haitian Who Spells Haiti with a Small h:

Next time you say *haitian* with a lower case h
like an obscenity, a lash on your back,
Like you have heard it over and over
spit out and spit on
Touch your lips forming the word
And take pride in their fullness and luxury.

I don't love you in spite of your Blackness.
The color of liquid amber, smooth and clear,
means you to me.

I'll admire your skin with mine
and show you the warm glow I love.

I can't overlook your country and love you.
I see your country because I see you--

. . .

I hold you tight enough that all you think is
us
but the newscaster in the background tells
of growing anti-Haitian sentiment,
the new change in policy to match.
I feel you cringe, and wither in my arms.

People who say *haitian* with bile on their
tongue
With hatred in their voices, minds, and
lives,
With fists pounding and fear in their
nostrils
can't see you.

Elena: I remember when I first moved to the U.S.
Elementary school was a nightmare. I'll never
forget those kids pointing and laughing at me and
yelling, "She talks funny! She talks funny!"

Charline: In my writing class, we discussed accents and
dialects and how unfair it is to separate and
judge by them.

Marc: I wanted my students to know that their language
is just as important as Samuel Johnson's. I let
them work in groups to define their own slang,
make their own dictionaries. But my cooperating

teacher had a problem with that. We had to abandon the project.

Elena: Today I was talking to a friend about how great it was learning about the Gullah language and that I can't wait to expose my students to such a rich heritage. My friend replied, "I don't see what the big deal is. Who cares about Gullah?" I almost fell out of my chair.

Marc: We can respect dialects and still teach them what Jesse Jackson calls "cash language." If we do both of these, who loses?

Julie: In my classroom, we'll read to each other often, and we will respect one another's dialects, while learning why Standard English is important to know.

Charline: Black English is so rich--these two black women saw each other on the bus and they apparently hadn't seen each other in a long time--I could listen to their lilting, excited tones forever; they rise and fall, their words tumbling over each other and an occasional, "Oh, no!" punctuating their discourse.

Nathalie: In my practicum, when we were talking about Countee Cullen's poem, "Incident", Shameka said that it had to be a white person who called Cullen a "nigger" because only whites say "nigger;" blacks say "Niggah." Wow! I couldn't believe she broke that up linguistically.

Marc: A question came to mind during all this. If blacks were a controversial group in the sixties concerning civil rights, just as women were a controversial group during the early part of this century concerning equal rights, and gays and lesbians are a controversial group today, what will be the next oppressed group to emerge?

Emily: Yesterday, we were talking about gay and lesbian issues in school. I am amazed and disappointed with how controversial the topic still is.

Elena: I have to read Annie on My Mind! It's a book about an adolescent lesbian relationship. It should be interesting. I've never read anything like that before. Nothing comes close.

- Emily: I guess I'm still naive, but I thought the world was becoming more accepting.
- Charline: Disinterested, he turned to the second chapter of Rubyfruit Jungle and said, "What's the book about?"
"Growing up lesbian in America."
He dropped the book on my desk with a thud.
- Emily: Okay, I lied. I am not really that amazed, but I am disappointed. I was just thinking what if it was my child who was gay. How would I handle seeing him or her persecuted and humiliated?
- Elena: I'm reading Annie on My Mind. How am I going to bring these issues into my classroom????
- Joe: The "core curriculum" is about as representative of this country as the majority of its congressmen. Deplorable. And irresponsible to allow this problem to perpetuate, as generations of black and Hispanic and female and lesbian and gay students filter through it.
- Elena: I discovered an article by Marvin Hoffman, "Teaching Torch Song: Gay Literature in the Classroom." Marvin Hoffman took a big risk and lived to tell about it. I plan on using gay literature in the classroom, and one day I will have an article published in the *English Journal* about my experiences.
- Julie: My classroom will be one in which literature by women and people of all races, nationalities, and orientations will receive equal treatment. We'll talk openly about issues raised in texts, and we'll always be respectful to one another.
- Joe: To deprive the classroom of August Wilson's voice or Sandra Cisneros' or Rita Mae Brown's is a disservice to all our students.
- Charline: Before, I wanted to teach because I thought my English teachers were cool, but now because I want all kids to have a chance.
- Robin: I want to help students find the mastery that will allow them to wield the fire, instead of just getting burned.

Jenny: I love finally being around people with similar ideas about life, people who appreciate those who are different from them.

Charline: Everyone's American dream is different.

The NCTE Convention in Orlando

Jenny: I'm at the NCTE Convention in Orlando, sitting on the floor in the center of the Orange County Convention Center. The first session that we went to, I looked behind us and Linda Rief was sitting there. I knew it was her because everyone has these big plastic-jacketed name tags on. I whispered to Shelley that she was behind us, and Shelley's eyes got really big. We are such habitual note passers that we wrote her a note, and she wrote back! Wow!

Charline: We're at the convention. We saw Virginia Hamilton, Gary Paulsen, Debra Frasier. And I met Linda Rief, she was great! She said she was glad to meet us, and I told her I cried all the way through the elderly chapter.

Kevin: I've loved the workshops where I got to write something, especially the one with Tom Romano, Nancy Gorrell, and Linda Rief. Calvin was really excited to meet Nancy Gorrell after doing his research project based on her article. I was so happy for him.

Julie: Tom Romano talked about freewriting, and how writing on something you love can really drive the revision process.

Charline: I got to meet Leila Christenbury, and she's real!

Emily: She signed my book!

Shelley: At 3:30 Sunday, I bought a copy of Clearing the Way, then concluded that I MUST get it signed. Jenny thought I was nuts, running all over the civic center on the chance I might find Tom Romano. She said,

Jenny: You'll have just as much luck if you sit here and wait for him to walk by.

Shelley: So I took off running and he walked right by them where they were waiting for me.

Julie: There he is!

Shelley: So then Calvin tried to hold onto him while everyone else went to find me. Somehow, I did get

my book signed. He wrote, "Thanks for asking."
And I really think he meant it.

Nathalie: Elena and I went to a session on the Gullah language. It was wonderful. These people sang for us and told wonderful stories.

Julie: The exhibit hall was huge! There were tons of people and lots of great books and stuff to look at.

Nathalie: Posters galore, free books including I Am the Cheese.

Jenny: We kept comparing loot, racing around to find each other's bargains.

Nathalie: cheap books, bookmarks, postcards . . .

Elena: We had PRESERVICE TEACHERS in neon over our heads. But who cares?

Nathalie: We made out like bandits!

Elena: I loved every minute of it.

Emily: I can't believe I just spoke to Robert Cormier!

Julie: Robert Cormier is a really nice person.

Shelley: The Poetry Alive! folks were singularly wonderful. I really do want to go on the road with them. I'm the best memorizer this side of the Mississippi.

Emily: I could spend days in the exhibit hall.

Kevin: I loved getting up in front of that room of people in the gay\lesbian issues session. I talked about The Drowning of Stephan Jones. But I admit to wondering whether or not they thought Calvin and I were gay. I never talked to him about it. I guess maybe I didn't want to admit being self-conscious.

Charline: Today was wonderful. Kevin, Calvin, and I took part in the symposium, and I gave a five-minute synopsis of Rubyfruit Jungle. People liked it, or at least everyone told me they did.

Julie: I'm so proud of my classmates. I know they must have been nervous, but you certainly couldn't tell. I hadn't realized when we talked about it

in class that this was such a cutting edge and sensitive issue. I think that because our class is so open, and because we discussed so freely, I somehow thought other methods classes did the same. I've learned otherwise.

Charline: I really got a lot from the convention--I learned about seeing the kids, whoever they are, and writing with feeling and relevance, connecting with self and with each other. How passionate I must remain about all of this teaching stuff.

Elena: I was overwhelmed.

Charline: I felt like a kid in a candy story!

Shelley: We were glowy and star-struck all day.

Charline: The more I learn, the more I realize that I don't know anything!

Kevin: I was so glad to just hang out with everyone from the group. It reminded me of band tours in college--we always seemed to come back closer friends when we got to share those kinds of great emotional experiences together.

Charline: I am so glad I went. This is an experience that I can never trade or replace, and it makes me realize that our program is very far ahead of the game, or at least our teacher is--because we have been exposed to so much more than a lot of beginning teachers, I think.

Jenny: One of the things I will remember most about this convention is meeting Leila Christenbury and how excited she was to meet us.

Kevin: I've enjoyed reading her book so much this year, and I really felt like I knew her--and now I can say I really do.

Nathalie: What a wonderful weekend.

The Handbook

Joe: You could hear a pin drop. They aren't responding. They aren't discussing. My enthusiasm is impacting them like a wet tennis ball. I excuse myself momentarily and beeline back to my desk. *[Joe leaves the group and mimes the search.]* Rummaging, rummaging, scouring, hunting for--Where is it? The students are talking among themselves now--confidently. I continue searching as I feel my body growing warm and tense. In my panic I try to recall examples of withitness and overlapping. I thumb through my filing cabinet like a giant rolodex. I think we're on wait time 5 or something. It's got to be here, I couldn't perform without a net. I wouldn't trust myself to--Here it is! *[He "finds" his handbook.]* I clutch it tightly against my chest like Dumbo's feather and return to the center of attention.

[All students retrieve their handbooks, which have been on display.]

Shelley: As of today, I have read eighty-nine articles about teaching English. That's about one per day since the semester began, but I still feel like I have barely started to learn and absorb.

Joe: I make up my own categories? This assignment seems too saturated with autonomy.

Emily: I wasn't sure exactly what was supposed to go in this handbook or what I considered significant, so anything that I really liked got put in the handbook pile beside my TV.

Joe: With all the questions I had--excuse me--have about teaching, I envisioned a handbook rivaling the Talmud in volume.

Elena: I collected mountains of material this semester, and sitting down to sift through it was not a one-hour job. I had to do some soul searching and decide what was important to me.

Marc: When I began to put the handbook together, I noticed things could be divided into particular categories. These also happened to be things I'm very interested in and concerned about. It would be foolish to assume this was purely coincidental.

Joe: How can I make a handbook if I don't know what I'll need it for? (My paranoid logic rears its ugly head and ends in a preposition, no less.)

Charline: I have assembled something I am calling my handbook, but doesn't a handbook define the rules, tell you how to operate something and where to put all the spare parts? You know, they come with the appliances and toys in the boxes marked "Some assembly required." What an awesome task to try to put everything I learned and need to know into a book for me to look back on. I could spend a whole semester on this.--Oh! I just did!

Calvin: I saved everything--things I did in the classroom, articles I read and loved, poems, and bits and pieces of my life as it has become these past few weeks. It's amazing to me how quickly the doors to my future have opened.

Joe: I obsessed and worried privately about this handbook until the day I heard that watch-cry--negative capability, which for me, would ride shotgun with *carpe diem*. I had been nervous that the handbook would not reach "irritable fact." Then I realized that it didn't have to.

Emily: Instead of searching for the perfect article, I looked for ones that had a few things in them that I really felt passionate about.

Julie: This handbook contains articles and materials by teachers whose ideas, convictions, values, and leadership I admire. These are teachers who aren't afraid to venture out and try something new to engage their students, teachers who are constantly reflecting on their teaching experiences.

Calvin: Nancy Gorrell is in here. I made a philosophical and literal connection with her about poetry. I don't want to lose touch with her or her thoughts about teaching.

Julie: My handbook also contains poems that I have discovered during the last three months. Most of them are for and about young people. I learned so much about poetry this semester. I learned that I can write poetry--and so can my students.

Emily: The poetry-and-other-writings section is really for my own enjoyment. Some of the poems were

handed out in class, some I photocopied from friends and classmates, and the rest I found in various places. The Jim Hall poems are my favorites. I can't wait to read them to a class of my own one day.

Shelley: The thirty-eight articles that made it into this handbook are those I feel consciously better for having read, those which gave me insight, hope, enlightenment, smiles, great ideas.

Elena: This handbook gave me an opportunity to organize my life.

Marc: I've learned a lot this semester about how to respond to writing, and in turn how to inspire people to write more. So I have made a whole section: "Inspire Your Students to Write."

Calvin: My house is full of piles and boxes and folders of the things that have given me meaning and experience this semester, so I didn't really have to hunt for things to put in the handbook. The hard part was taking things out.

Marc: I have another section called, "A funny thing happened when we began writing." It includes some of the writing prompts we used in class. Most of us began the semester much in the same mindset as high school students, writing what we thought teachers wanted. These prompts helped break me out of that pattern.

Shelley: Much of my impetus for doing such exhaustive reading was a fear that came early on when I felt very little passion for anything I was reading, and I got scared that I was never going to find anything to put in here. Because I really needed it to mean something. I have done enough meaningless schoolwork in my life.

Nathalie: At first, I photocopied any *English Journal* article about specific pieces of writing. I had an assumption that I was going to teach the same books, the same short stories, the same poems as my high school English teachers. Teaching for me was the instruction of one canonized book every three weeks.

Emily: At one point, my entire living room was covered with little piles of paper.

Nathalie: So, I photocopied articles about Great Expectations, Hamlet, Of Mice and Men, and Romantic literature. Finally, I have kept only a few of these articles in my handbook.

Emily: I have a whole group of articles that deal with Standard English. When is it necessary? When is the student's "home language" appropriate? These articles support the idea that there is room in the classroom and in the "real world" for both. I've collected these articles because I am aware that I am guilty of being a language cop. I know that I am not completely cured, and I want to have plenty of medicine on hand when I have a relapse.

Nathalie: Anne asked us to bring in annotated articles about film, whole language, or anything else that interested us. Through these readings, I began to change my image of teaching.

Marc: One thing this handbook will do for me is help me remember a truly unique learning experience--a class that became an encouraging and supportive learning environment. We were allowed into the workings of the class, and the schedule was constantly open for changes in direction.

Julie: My handbook represents a semester that has been the best learning experience of my life. I know now the kind of teacher I want to be. And if I should find myself losing my way, I'll have my handbook to look to for guidance and inspiration.

Nathalie: One can construct my personality from the things I have chosen. Someone who doesn't know me could wonder who I am, this person who likes Prufrock, Allende, and Wordsworth . . . who finds articles on multiculturalism and also on fantasy.

Kevin: This *EJ* cover captures my semester: riding my bike to class, late--with all the excuses for my problems with punctuality stacked upon my shoulders: "I was trying to be an artist;" "I was trying to be an actor;" "I was trying to be a musician;" "I was trying to be a dancer;" "I was trying to be an acrobat;" "I was trying to be a writer;" "I was trying to be a juggler." Roll all those things together, and I think what I'm trying to be is a teacher.

Elena: Some of my discoveries are incomplete, but I haven't given up searching. Some of my questions

and wonderings will have to be found in my own experience.

Charline: I feel like this handbook is still growing inside my head and my soul, my fingers are itching to keep it and keep working.

Calvin: This handbook is me becoming a human being, and me becoming a teacher, and me becoming a person who now has friends and memories that he will treasure for the rest of his life. I am exhausted.

The End of the Semester

- Charline: Lots to think about, lots to ponder, lots to decide.
- Kevin: It feels really good to know that I'm close to becoming a teacher.
- Shelley: I breathe better these last few months, having remembered how liberating it is for me to read and write poetry--cable TV be damned.
- Marc: I have done more writing for myself this semester than I have done in the last four years.
- Jenny: I realize I am just beginning to add writing to my personal life.
- Emily: I have confidence in myself.
- Robin: I am sure I am in the right profession.
- Charline: "Spot possibilities." That's our job.
- Calvin: More and more, I believe this is the key--listening. Hearing what kids want and need to say.
- Marc: We mustn't be afraid to learn from our students.
- Charline: As long as I can remember, I have felt that I had to have a specific reason for learning. I was always the one to ask so many questions about why we had to do things a certain way, or "What will this teach me?" But I was never given the freedom to truly explore the possibilities of learning--until this semester, when I was given guidelines for beginning the process of learning about teaching, and then told to "GO!" It has been incredibly liberating.
- Julie: I've neglected personal writing for several years, and I am thrilled to have been in a learning environment that encouraged us to explore creative and personal writing. I have learned a lot about my strengths and weaknesses as a writer, but I've also learned that I have an inner voice that wants and needs to express itself.
- Joe: I still have a lot of apprehension about teaching writing. There are still lots of unanswered

questions, as there should be, but what I've come to decide is that students take great personal risks when they write, so those risks should be respected. Every student's paper has worth, and it's a teacher's responsibility to find that worth, not bury it under red ink. The key aspect of evaluation is the root word--"value."

Charline: When I wrote my piece about teaching students to read, I didn't need to use a lot of professional buzzwords, and the writing seemed to come to me easily. Anne said that must be because I have internalized how I want to teach my students to read. I think she's right. I can't wait to get started.

Nathalie: I really want to start teaching. I don't want to wait any longer.

Emily: I'm sure now that this is for me.

Robin: Despite the frustration, the moments of triumph (of breaking through and seeing light) were worth it all.

Shelley: I feel like I'm heading open-eyed into a difficult, patience-testing, and amazingly complex future that may frustrate and exasperate me immensely; and it's the absolute right place for me to be.

Kevin: I want to remember why I am choosing to teach instead of being a journalist. What I didn't get very often in journalism was dialogue. When I tell a powerful story, I want to hear what other people think about it, hear what it makes them feel. There's no better place for these types of passionate conversations to occur than in a classroom.

Elena: I want to remember the voices of my peers as we worried and dreamed about our futures. I want to remember Anne's comforting words that eased our fears and furthered our goals.

Jenny: I want to remind myself that in my classroom, I need to try things that feel right to me. They may take off, they may not, but I need to have the courage to try things.

Joe: *Negative capability.*

Charline: "I choose to risk my significance." I love that line. It just expresses my life right now.

Kevin: I am going to be a damn good teacher.

Robin: I am exhilarated and proud.

Julie: I have been on a quest this semester to find the teacher in me. There's still a lot to learn and discover, but I am well on my way; I'm ready to begin the journey.

Nathalie: I have grown so much during this semester. My attitudes have changed, my thinking has changed, and my life has changed. I want to become a teacher. Before, I thought I would like to be a teacher. Now I want a classroom and I want students.

Calvin: I feel a sense of possibility that I have never really felt before.

Shelley: I am an idealistic fool, and I will work to stay that way.

Robin: The weird teacher down the hall. It was Anne, and now it is me--guided by my own principles that she helped me to articulate--another of her students, out to change the world.

Charline: Do you ever feel like you are creating--history?

The End

Epilogue

Reflections on the Script

It is too soon to know if the twelve students represented in this script will retain their passion, their commitment, and their confidence. It is not within the scope of this study to claim that three years from graduation they will be teaching in accordance with what they learned at the university. The purpose of this study is not to arrive at certainty on these issues, but rather to raise questions, stimulate imagination, and generate possibilities. The purpose of this study is, in part, what the novelist James Baldwin offered as the purpose of art: "to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers" (qtd. in Winterson, 13).

John Goodlad's study of teacher education programs leads him to call them "disturbingly alike and almost uniformly inadequate" (qtd. in Shor 1987, 7). He laments that "this nation cannot continue to afford the brief, casual, conforming preparation now experienced by those who will staff its classrooms." He calls for experimentation and risk: "We will only begin to get evidence of the potential power of pedagogy when we dare to risk and support markedly deviant classroom procedures" (qtd. in Shor 1987, 7). Goodlad's challenge seems consistent with the call to get beneath the taken-for-granted "answers" that characterize most teacher education programs and to "lay

bare the questions" that will allow us to re-imagine and reinvent.

For me, the overarching question that arises from this script and from this experience is, "What generated this passion? What stimulated the strong sense of personal involvement and commitment that these students expressed?" If I were to join a discussion of this question, I would suggest that a sense of wholeness, a kind of unity in the experience was important. The personal/academic dichotomy collapsed. When students kept a journal, it was a journal "of your life," rather than simply "of your classroom and academic experiences." In the classroom, in addition to intellectual and pedagogical concerns, discussions centered on the personal dimensions of becoming a teacher--emotional responses; how to deal with stress; strategies for interpersonal communications; practical problem solving. All assignments for the class asked that students engage as individual human beings with whatever subject matter was before them; "productive idiosyncrasy" (Bisner 1991, 79) was respected and celebrated; a high degree of autonomy was required. Students themselves, as the class began to bond, decided to meet at a pub once a week; there, in informal conversation, they brought their whole lives into a community originally based only on their choice of profession and the accident of section placement. The merging of their personal and professional/academic lives

generated a unified experience. Unity is one of the primary characteristics that Dewey ascribes to aesthetic experience. Unity, he says, is what makes the difference between ordinary experience and an experience.

The most elaborate philosophic or scientific inquiry and the most ambitious industrial or political enterprise has, when its different ingredients constitute an integral experience, esthetic quality. For then its varied parts are linked to one another, and do not merely succeed one another. (1934, 55)

It is my speculation that esthetic experience, the experience of wholeness, assists the process of internalizing knowledge. Dewey makes the same point:

[T]he things which we have most completely made a part of ourselves, that we have assimilated to compose our personality and not merely retained as incidents, cease to have a separate conscious existence. (1934, 71)

Caine and Caine's review of brain research leads them to call for a sort of wholeness that results from "orchestrated immersion" (1991, 107).

The thrust of orchestrated immersion, specifically, is to take information off the page and the blackboard and bring it to life in the minds of students. Immersion focuses on how students are exposed to content. When wholeness and interconnectedness cannot be avoided, students are obliged to employ their locale memory system in the exploration of content. (1991, 107)

Part of the wholeness that characterizes an esthetic experience derives from the implosion of the thinking-feeling/emotional-intellectual dichotomy. The very admission of "poetry and passion" into the academic arena

represents a denial of that dichotomy. One of the "markedly deviant classroom procedures" (Goodlad, qtd. in Shor 1987, 7) of the methods class represented in the script was the inclusion of poetry as a way of knowing and representing knowledge.

Implications for Future Research

Virginia Koehler pointed out in 1985, and it remains true, that very few studies have investigated the specific strategies of teacher educators. Koehler's discussion of implications for future research includes the observation that "descriptions of what is actually going on in teacher education classes are rare" (27). This script offers one such "description." We need, however, to broaden possibilities for the term "description," which, in educational research, has traditionally referred to a completely literal, linear reporting of observable events. If we respond to Eisner's challenge to "make public the ineffable" (1979, 200), will need a more diverse range of strategies for describing. Evocative representations, borrowing strategies from the arts, have a greater power than traditional reports to include "description" of events which are internal and not directly observable.

I would invite more descriptions of the teacher education experience, in a variety of forms, written both by "insiders," as is the case here, and by "outsiders," as has traditionally been the case in educational research. Our

knowledge will grow by accretion, richer and more complex, stimulating dialogue and generating new visions of possibility. According to Eisner, in qualitative research the growth of knowledge is "more horizontal than vertical."

[T]he idea that knowledge accumulates suggests that knowledge is an inert material that one can collect, store, and stockpile. To regard knowledge as inert is to reify it. Knowledge is not an inert material discovered through research, it is a functioning aspect of human cognition, a resource that lives in the biographies, thoughts, and actions of individuals. (1991, 210)

In addition to representations of the teacher education experience, we need longitudinal studies that inform us about what happens after the moment of "description." Without longitudinal work, we will never be able to move beyond speculation about what makes teacher education "stick."

CHAPTER 3
EVOCATIVE REPRESENTATIONS: THE SECOND EXEMPLAR

Prologue

Following Up

In the semester following the methods class of "Poetry and Passion in Teacher Education," I was assigned supervision of the internships of several students from the methods class. I decided I would like to follow the growth of the student who seemed to have made the furthest journey. What would happen to Calvin? What shape would his growth take? Or would that growth wither in the realities of a classroom?

But there was something more specific I wanted to watch, too. Calvin's artistic inclinations became clear to me very early, when I first assigned the writing of a poem. His initial draft was characterized by evocative detail. When revisions of first drafts were due, he turned in three poems, each a significantly different version of the initial one. Each of his revisions had its own shape, its own linguistic variations, and its own slightly different intent. It was clear that Calvin understood "re-seeing" in an artist's way and understood form as a critical part of

content. Throughout the semester, my sense of Calvin-as-artist was confirmed as I saw him taking creative risks, shaping language and experience, honoring both rationality and intuition, and reinventing himself.

Now, I wanted to see how Calvin's artistic sensibility would play itself out in the classroom--or if it would.

The Internship

During his internship, Calvin worked with ninth graders. In addition to "regular" classes of English, he would work with a two-period English block that was part of a special program for students preparing to enter the health professions. Many of the students in this program were disaffected and considered "at risk." Many had been counseled into the program and were there without enthusiasm. They were particularly without enthusiasm for their English block, which met twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

When Calvin agreed to be a participant in this study, I asked him to choose which class I would observe on a regular basis. He chose the seventh period "regular" class. At that point, he had only observed and assisted. He had not actually assumed teaching responsibilities, but he had seen enough to know that the seventh period class would be a challenge for him in terms of management. I saw his willingness to invite me into a class where he anticipated difficulties as, itself, a demonstration of creative risk-

taking. Later, he would also invite me to visit the fourth- and fifth-period block.

Methodology

Unlike the study of the methods class, this study was planned as a study in advance. I began with a very broad question: What will I see in Calvin's work that will inform me about the growth of teacher knowledge? This was the question that I shared with him when we talked about the project. There was another question, a little more focused, that I did not share: Will I see anything in Calvin's work that reflects his artistic inclinations and understandings? I left this question unspoken, not wanting to pressure or predispose him to "be an artist" in his work.

I observed the seventh period class almost every day during the nine-week internship. Using a laptop computer, I made detailed field observations. I quickly became aware that my training as a writer was assisting the process. I had been trained to see and record particularity, to be aware of multiple events occurring simultaneously, to include a range of sensory detail in description, and to make quick intuitive judgments about relevance. I had never done this sort of data gathering for research before, but I felt like I'd been doing it all my life. As a back-up, I used audiotape to record class sessions and later used the tapes to fill gaps in the notes. The result was a highly detailed narrative record.

Calvin and I had agreed that we would do three interviews--two during the process and one at the conclusion of the internship. The first interview was conducted by phone and tape recorded. But then, something that wasn't in the original plan began to happen. Calvin liked to talk about his experiences. He began calling me every day to talk about what happened in class. With his consent, I recorded our conversations. If he called at a time when I wasn't home, he would sometimes leave an extended message on the answering machine. I transcribed the tapes of our conversations and the messages from the answering machine. They became significant field texts.

Ethical Concerns

My initial concern grew out of the fact that I was Calvin's internship supervisor, responsible for evaluating his performance. What kind of pressure would he feel when I made the request to involve him in a research project? Would he feel he couldn't say no? I grappled with this question for several weeks. Finally, I decided to trust the open nature of the relationship I had established with members of the methods class and the extent to which I had always encouraged them to question me, to disagree, and to thoughtfully decline my advice. I thought I could trust Calvin to tell me if he really didn't want to do this. Beyond the initial concern, I wondered: if Calvin did consent to participate, would my ongoing presence in his

internship classroom (as opposed to the occasional supervisory visit) add additional stress to his already inherently stressful position?

When I did propose the project, I talked openly with Calvin about my concerns. He acknowledged that they were valid concerns, that it did make him a little nervous to think about my being there on a regular basis. He wanted to think about it. He would let me know in a few days.

Later, when observations were well underway and we were talking on the phone almost every night, I felt the pressure of another ethical consideration. As a researcher, I wanted to be primarily a nonintervening listener. As a supervisor, I wanted to offer feedback, make analyses and suggestions. Was it appropriate--was it ethical--to withhold feedback that I thought might be useful to him? I thought not. And yet, it was true that if I were only his supervisor, we would not be talking on the phone every night. To withhold feedback on these occasions would not be to withhold something he would have had if I had been his supervisor only and not a researcher; it was something he wouldn't have had anyway. Still, it didn't seem right.

Ultimately, this became my stance: I would be primarily a listener. Listening was, I realized, central to the way I worked as a supervisor, too. "Yes," I would say. "Really?" "Why do you think that happened?" "Tell me more about that." Usually, if Calvin was trying to sort out a

problem, all he needed to do was keep talking; he would sort it out for himself. Occasionally, however, when he would find himself mired or going in circles, he would arrive at a point at which he would be direct: "I need some help with this." Or, "I'm stuck. I really don't know what to do." When that happened, I stopped being a researcher and became his supervisor.

When the research was concluded and I had constructed the report which follows, still another ethical issue surfaced. I printed out a copy of "Saturated with Poetry: First Draft of a Teacher," held it in my hands, and had an anxiety attack. There on the title page was my name. Under the title page were over eighty pages of Calvin's words, Calvin's experience. What was *my* name doing on this report? It didn't belong to me. But how could it *not* belong to me? I had spent months of my life observing, listening, recording, transcribing, domaining, drafting, shaping, reshaping. "Whose *is* this?" I asked myself.

Ultimately, I arrived at the logical conclusion that it was *ours*. If it hadn't been for Calvin and his willingness to be engaged, the report would not have existed. If it hadn't been for me and my engagement, it would not have existed. It was *ours*. This is not the traditional research position. Traditionally, researchers have taken their data, changed the names, and called it theirs. I have departed from that tradition. In this report, Calvin's name has not

been changed. In January of 1996, at the International Conference on Qualitative Research, we appeared on the program as co-presenters of "Saturated with Poetry: First Draft of a Teacher."

The Purposes of the Study

As is usually the case in a qualitative study, the originally defined purpose of the study modified as work progressed. The original broad concerns soon narrowed to a double focus and to dual purposes: (a) to understand the dynamics and effects of Calvin's idiosyncratic approaches to teaching poetry and (b) to see how his way of being in the classroom might reflect the concept of teacher as artist.

The purpose of this evocative representation is to bring the reader vicariously into the dynamics of Calvin's classroom, to generate understanding through vicarious experience.

Construction of the Evocative Text

"The major problem we face in qualitative inquiry," writes Harry Wolcott, "is not to get data, but to get rid of it!" (1990, 18). As I worked on this text, I remembered Wolcott's statement and also Michaelangelo's famous assertion that he would take a block of marble and chip away everything that was not David. I had reams of data. From that shapeless mass, I had to construct something.

As in the construction of the reader's theater script, I had a sense of making a found poem on a large scale. I

wasn't actually writing new material. I was juxtaposing existing text in ways designed to suggest tensions, thematic concerns, and dynamic relations. The resulting narrative denies chronology as a governing structure and employs a quasi-stanzaic form. It uses ellipses and white space as methods of incorporating silence and of generating a sense of duration. It often makes leaps rather than transitions. In short, it is a narrative that borrows heavily from poetic strategy.

SATURATED WITH POETRY: FIRST DRAFT OF A TEACHER

Prologue

Almost every day in his class, there was poetry. They never really "studied" poetry in the sense that English teachers usually mean when they talk about studying poetry. There was no extensive talk about the poets or their time periods or historical contexts; there were no line-by-line analyses of poems; there were no catalogs of literary terms systematically applied--alliteration, assonance, scansion, symbolism--though a basic vocabulary (simile, metaphor, rhythm, rhyme) sometimes, casually, occurred. There were no tests of knowledge about poetry. But almost every day, there was poetry.

The life of the classroom was saturated with poetry. More specifically, the life of the classroom was saturated with poems--poems read aloud by the teacher, poems read aloud by the students, poems found in books and magazines, poems written by the class together, poems written by students individually, poems written by the teacher.

Poems became the focus of play and the instruments of "real work." From the teacher's point of view, poems became a way to engage the disengaged, to connect students with canonical literature, to secure attention; a way to teach grammar and vocabulary, a way to approach writing, a way to

develop reading skills. From the students' point of view, poems became a way of connecting with themselves and each other, a way of connecting their school lives and their personal lives, and a way of expressing intensity. For both teacher and students, saturation led to transformation. How did this happen? Why did it happen? What does this happening mean?

Calvin did not set out to create a poetry-dense environment, did not even have a concept of that; he hardly had a concept of himself teaching. That was his transformation. He entered the internship classroom unsure of who he would be as a teacher, unsure that he could be a teacher. He left the internship knowing who he was, what he wanted to do, and that he was powerful.

Let's go back to the beginning.

At the first of the fall semester, Calvin was quiet, kept to the fringes of his methods class. His first attempts at micro teaching were awkward. He wrote about it in his journal:

I dunno. What the hell am I going to do if I can't fucking stand in front of a group of people without sounding like a babbling, mumbling reject from a bad Woody Allen movie? Everybody looks so confused! If I can't form a coherent thought or explain what I mean to a bunch of grad students, how can I possibly hope to make any kind of a connection with high schoolers?

Calvin was still stumbling around a bit during his practicum teaching experience. (Jenny was his practicum partner.)

I don't know what happened today. I try to be sensitive and give them one on one help, but the writing prompt just flopped. It really sounded good on paper in that book--"Write about a time when your expectations weren't met"--I thought it sounded open enough that they could be thoughtful and have fun. I gave them a web to use but told them they didn't have to use it. But the kids were bored and I had a hard time keeping them on task.

When we got in the car I was whining to Jenny about what a shitty job I did so she would tell me I did okay, but then she turned it around on me: "I think you need to ask yourself why you want to be a teacher, Calvin."

I didn't really have an answer so I said something sarcastic like how I hate canned topics like that in questions because they sound like boring writing prompts. But as I sat in class later chewing the cud of the day's events, I kept coming back to that question. So much of my life up to this point has been carried out under the philosophy of "I don't know" and "Well, it seemed like the right thing to do at the time, but . . . " and I realized that I really have no idea why I want to teach. That scares me.

By the time Calvin entered his internship classroom, he did have some sense of why he wanted to teach and of how he wanted to teach. He had achieved an enabling level of confidence and was eager for a larger teaching experience. "Still," he said, "there's so much I don't know."

But he knew a lot. He knew more than he knew.

The InternshipIn the Classroom

Mr. Dillon goes to the front of the room. He has a printed page in his hand. Without introduction, he begins to read the Spiderman poem, Jim Hall's "Maybe Dat's Your Pwoblem, Too". He reads in an animated way, moving back and forth in front of the room, pausing at certain moments in the poem to gesture. Students are watching, following him with their eyes. They snicker; then one person laughs.

Mr. Dillon: Go ahead and laugh; this is a funny poem.

Given permission, students laugh. He continues reading, shakes his head, makes sucker cups with his fingers, "and then I go fwying like cwazy, acwoss de town, fwom woof top to woof top." Students laugh often.

About half way through the poem, he lowers the paper, continues to recite by heart, loses his place momentarily, goes back to reading from the page. Students are following him with their eyes, laughing frequently, some of them looking a little puzzled.

He finishes reading: "Maybe dats your pwoblem, too. Who knows? Maybe dats de whole pwoblem wif evwybody. Nobody can boin dey suits. Dey all fwame wesistant." Laughter.

Mr. Dillon: I'm sorry, I just felt silly and I wanted to read that to you guys. It's up here if any of you want it. He places copies of the poem on the front desk, heads for the back of the room. Marcus goes immediately and gets a copy of the poem. Leroy mutters "fwame wesistant" and laughs to himself.

Ms. Scott who was sitting in a back desk, is standing now, collecting papers. Students begin talking among themselves.

Intermittently, the phrase "fwame wesistant" rises in different voices from different parts of the room.

One student asks another: Where's that poem?

Another student answers: Up there.

Mr. Dillon is conferring with Marcus, Tamora, and Harley, who are looking at a copy of the poem, asking questions about the pronunciation of words. He asks them, "Did you look at the poem? That's how he wrote it down. That's why I read it that way." Harley asks Mr. Dillon to "say 'fwame wesistant' again." He says it again.

As Mr. Dillon is setting up the overhead projector, students are shuffling papers, finding what they need for the upcoming activity; they talk. A voice: "all fwame wesistant. All our suits are fwame wesistant. Maybe dats his pwoblem."

On the Telephone

In fourth period, I wrote the agenda on the board, and the first thing I did, I waited for a moment when it was almost quiet, and I started reading "Maybe Dat's Your Pwoblem, Too," and I read it just like I read it to [my son] Joe, with all the inflection and everything, and just walked around the room, around all the tables, and looked up every once in a while 'cause I do have most of it memorized. And they got completely quiet. As quiet as probably they've ever been except when they're listening to each other. And then I had them get in their groups.

When they came back from their break, I asked if they wanted me to read another poem. [Student voice]: "Yeah." And then [a touch of amazement in his voice] they all got quiet. I didn't have to wait. It wasn't like passing out the drills: "Okay guys, put your stuff away. Put your stuff away. I want it quiet, and I'm not gonna do it until you're quiet. C'mon. Everybody. Len, this means you, too. At least put your notebook away."

[Still sounding amazed]: You want me to read another poem?

[Student voice]: Yeah.

So I read "Preposterous." And Mike watched me the whole time.

In the Classroom

[Seventh Period]

Mr. Dillon: Guys, take a seat. I want to read you something. [He goes to the board, writes: "The Bleeder."] Guys, sit down. [He gestures with both hands, indicates "sit down." Students sit, but they continue to stir, shuffle, whisper.]

He begins to read: "By now, I bet he's dead. . . ."

Students settle quickly when he begins to read. As he reads, he walks across the front of the room and then between rows. "The slightest bruise and all his blood would simply bleed away."

Sophie waves her water bottle; it sloshes.

Students laugh at "sharp stick."

When he reaches "a sense of being bad together," there is absolute silence in the room.

On the Telephone

And then I came back up, and they were starting to get loud, so I pulled out Back to Class. And I didn't really have to do that much. I just sat down on the desk and held up the book, and about half the class looked at me. And then I just started explaining what the book was, and they got quiet. And then they listened to two of the poems.

They like to listen to me read. And the times that I have read things to them, it has been things that they have found interesting.

It was kinda the same thing I did with fourth period. You know, I was trying to get them to be quiet after the break. I was doing all my, you know, let's lean up against the desk and bat my eyes, try to make eye contact with people that are talking. That didn't work. So I put my hands up and said quietly, "Okay, quiet guys. Let's settle down so we can finish reading this." That didn't work. So finally, I just picked up right where I left off, started pacing and reading again. And then they got quiet, telling each other to shut up.

On the Telephone

I had never seen myself as that good a reader. But reading the poems out loud in class and seeing the effect that it had on the kids made me decide I wanted to keep doing that.

I found that it's one of the most effective ways to get kids quiet. Stand up there with something in my hand and just start reading. Cause then they do it. I don't have to say, "Be quiet." There are shut-ups and shhhh all over the room.

Interview

Why did you decide to read "The Bleeder?"

Mr. Dillon: I wasn't comfortable enough that the kids were understanding what exactly the Beast was in *Lord of the Flies*. When they were generating questions in their groups, they were still very specific: "What is the Beast?" And their answer would be "a snake-like thing." I didn't want them to get the impression that that's what the Beast was. Because it's not, for me. And it wasn't for the boys in the book. There's the quote at the end where Ralph is saying "The Beast is us; the beast is in all of us." So I wanted to explore that theme without me having to tell them that that's what the Beast is.

It was an opportunity to use a poem I liked, to talk about something I felt they would want to talk about. And it seemed to naturally fit in with what I was doing.

Do you remember how you realized that? How did you make the connection?

Mr. Dillon: Between "The Bleeder" and *The Lord of the Flies*? Well, Ms. Scott and I talked before we started *Lord of the Flies* about what we thought the main themes of the book would be and how it would apply to these kids, where they might make connections, what the book would have to say to them. And we basically decided on organization and evil. And I felt that through the prereading activities and

through the process of them having to work in groups, they were experiencing all the problems with organization and the need for structure, but they weren't experiencing what the book had to say about evil. And . . .

I was reading over the poem again, not thinking of *Lord of the Flies*, but when I read it, it made me think of *Piggy*, and I said, Ah-ha!

How and when did you realize that you could use poetry as a management tool?

It was gradual in fourth period. That's the class with Bernie in it. It was just an observation I made that on days that I did something at the first of the period to focus their attention, I had much better days in the classroom. And it was usually me reading a poem. Later it might have been a writing prompt or something. But it was a need for me to focus their attention soon after they sat down. And I would always rather read a poem than do almost anything. It was fun. I would spend an hour before class started, flipping through the books, knowing what I was going to do that day and trying to find a poem that would fit.

What kept me reading poems was just a recognition of my power standing up in front of them reading.

And that was a surprise to you?

Very much so. I mean, I've had a lot of practice reading to my own children, and I use a lot of inflection when I read to them. But it wasn't quite so dramatic when I was reading to them.

Did you find it easy to be as dramatic as you needed to be in the classroom?

Not really. I think it was the Jim Hall poem that helped. Cause that was the first one I really read, walking around the room, and since I had some of it memorized, looking up into their faces every once in a while. And reading it like it's written. And I think I was more comfortable doing it the first time with that one cause I've done it so much with my kids, Sam and Joe. And then it got easier.

And another thing about me reading aloud; it encouraged my students in fourth and fifth period to share work that they had written that they might not otherwise have shared. I don't know if they thought it sounded better when I read it than when they read it, or if it was safer to have me read it. They wouldn't always say don't tell who it is. It was weird, in front of the class they would hand it to me and say "Read this please."

And what's your thinking now about why?

Well, to tell the truth, it did sound better when I read it. Because I'm used to reading them. And to hear me read their

words in the same way I read poems from the books was powerful for them, I think.

And then later on, when they were looking at the books and choosing poems themselves, I stopped. I wouldn't read them. I would read ones I picked, but if they picked one, they had to get up and read it. I wish I had had more time to do that. They were still kind of flat and reading them too fast towards the end, but I think it helped them; having to do it helped them.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Okay, the test has been passed out. There should be no talking.

It is fourth period. Students are completely quiet, pens moving on paper. One boy in a baseball cap is reading down the page. Others have begun to write immediately. Mr. Dillon is at the front checking roll silently, visually. He is standing near a library cart with three tiers of poetry books.

Students write diligently. The room is quiet except for sounds of pencils tapping lightly on the table--a quiet sort of concerto of tappings, with an occasional erasure.

Crissy is the first to finish. She picks up a comb that has been on the table, runs it through her hair, leans over and picks up her back pack. She takes out a bottle of Rave hair spray and a brush. Mr. Dillon goes to her, bends and speaks quietly, asks if she has finished the test, slides her papers out from under the paraphernalia she is piling on the table top. He takes her papers to his desk, then walks slowly around the room. Crissy yawns, brushes her hair.

A few other students are finishing their tests. Mr. Dillon goes to the table nearest the door, collects papers from

several people, sets down an open book of poems in front of Rusty. Rusty picks up the book, leans back in his chair, places the book on his legs and reads.

Mr. Dillon goes to the next table, takes a test paper from Steve. He leaves momentarily, then returns, hands him a book, American Sports Poems. He hands it to him closed. Steve looks at the cover a few moments, then opens it, turns pages, stops, and reads.

Mr. Dillon takes a book to Renee, who has finished her test and put her head down on the table. He asks her something, she shakes her head no, he hands her the book, she takes it, sits up straight, opens the book, begins to read the first poem.

There are no conversations in the room. A few sounds of papers moving, sliding against each other. Crissy is writing diligently, apparently a response to a note which she unfolded and placed in front of her on the table.

Mr. Dillon goes to Renee's table, gets down to eye level; they talk quietly. One by one, as students finish their tests, he hands them books or speaks with them quietly and points them toward the cart of books at the front--unless,

like Crissy, they have something already engaging their attention.

A boy goes to the cart of books, looks at what's there, motions for Mr. Dillon to come over; they talk briefly. While they consult, Janice approaches the cart, begins to look at books.

Two girls begin to whisper. A third girl at the table says, "Shhh." The two whisper a moment longer, then are quiet.

Steve has passed the book of sports poems to a girl at his left. She is reading. He watches her read.

Rusty motions to Mr. Dillon who approaches, then bends over the book where Rusty points. Rusty whispers, "That's a cool poem."

Crissy finishes her note and folds it, in the usual student-note fashion, into a small rectangle.

When all the test papers are in, Mr. Dillon asks Rusty if he would like to read aloud the poem that he liked. Rusty says yes and reads Shelley's classic poem "Ozymandias"--"I met a traveller from an antique land. . . ."

Rusty: That's pretty cool.

Steve: I didn't get it.

Mr. Dillon: What did you see when you were reading, Rusty?

Rusty explains what he saw; the scene includes a road. Mr. Dillon points out that the word *road* is not in the poem and asks what word made him see a road. They determine that he saw a road because of the word *traveler*.

Mr. Dillon: Does anybody else want to read one out loud?
Okay, Janice. [Janice begins to read really fast.] Whoa, whoa, whoa, Janice, Janice. [Students are laughing.] I gotta give you a ticket! Slow it down just a little bit. Okay, let's stop talking now, and she will wait until everybody is quiet. [They become quiet.] She begins again. She is reading "Seven Women's Blessed Assurance."

Janice: "One thing about me,/ I'm little and low . . ."

Mr. Dillon: Why did you like that, Janice?

Janice: I just liked how it rhymed.

Mr. Dillon: How it rhymed?

Janice: Yeah. How it flowed.

Mr. Dillon writes on the board: rhymed / flowed

Mr. Dillon: Tell me what you mean by "it flowed."

Janice: Well . . .

Mr. Dillon: That part where you felt it was really flowing; read a couple of lines of that please.

Janice: "I'm fat as butter
and sweet as cake."

Mr. Dillon writes those lines on the board.

Mr. Dillon: What do you call that? Does anybody know?

It's got a name.

Vonda: A metaphor.

Mr. Dillon: Okay. Is it a metaphor, though? Tell me what a metaphor is.

Diane: It's comparing something. Like when you say the water was as cold as ice.

Mr. Dillon: Okay. Does everybody think that's right? Do you guys know what the difference between a metaphor and a simile is? I just assumed that you knew that.

Janice puts her hand up.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Janice. What's the difference?

Janice: It's hard to explain.

Mr. Dillon: It is hard to explain because they're very close.

Gayle: One of them is when you say that's what it is. And the other one is when you describe it as if. Like, a rose is like a smile. That's like, that's a metaphor, right?

Mr. Dillon crosses his arms in the air in front of him, pointing in opposite directions, suggesting a reversal.

Wendy: Isn't a simile when you use *as* or *like*?

Mr. Dillon: Yes, it's when you use *as* or *like*. Is there a word that sounds sort of like this that would help you remember?

A voice: Smile?

Another voice: Similar?

Mr. Dillon: Yes, we're saying it's like something else, we're not saying it is something else. If you're saying it is something else, then it's a metaphor.

Okay, somebody else who has a book. C'mon, Steve, share one of those sports poems. I bet nobody in this room has ever read a sports poem.

Steve: It's about my favorite team. [He reads the poem.]

Kevin: I was having a hard time understanding that.

Mr. Dillon: Why were you having a hard time? What would you have to know for that poem to make sense? [Pause] The poem was full of names. What team was it?

Steve: The Mets

[A bell rings. This class will resume after a break.]

Renee reenters the room, asks, "Where are all the poem books coming from?"

Mr. Dillon: They're from the library. Every book on this cart is from that library.

Wendy: Mr. Dillon, I got a poem I want to read. He goes to her and she shows him what she wants to read.

Trenda approaches Mr. Dillon: "Mr. Dillon, can I read this one?"

Mr. Dillon: We got a line going here.

[Students are back in the room, at their places, talking.]

Steve has his sports poetry book open. He says to Trenda, one person away, "I want you to read this one." She takes the book and reads the poem.

Mr. Dillon writes on the board. Vonda / Gayle

Vonda begins to read "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou. ".
.. then they swarm around me like a swarm of honey bees. .
.. They try so much but they can't touch my inner mystery.
... I'm a woman, phenomenal woman, that's me."

Mr. Dillon: Why do you like that one?

Vonda: It's deep.

Mr. Dillon: Diane, why do you like that one?

Diane: Cause some of it's true. All of it's true.

Renee. She always writes about herself.

Mr. Dillon: Well, why does she do that?

Vonda: It's what she knows.

Mr. Dillon: What are you gonna know better than yourself guys?

Steve: Nothing.

Mr. Dillon: Nothing. [Pause] Rusty, what do you like when you read your poems?

Rusty: I like things that are negative.

Mr. Dillon: You like negative poems. Negative in what way?

Rusty: Looking at life from a condescending point of view, instead of . . . you know.

Mr. Dillon: [Making notes on the board] So Vonda likes "deep" in poems. And Diane was the one that said "truth." Gayle, you wanted to read one.

[Gayle begins to read really fast.]

Mr. Dillon: Whoa,whoa,whoa . . . slow down a little bit.

Gayle: [Reading more slowly] "When it comes right down to it, . . . how far to go, how far to let him go,

how far to let yourself go. . . . It's more than
I can bear. . . ."

Mr. Dillon: Why did you like that one? [Pause] Can you
hold up that book and show everybody? Did you read what's
on the back? Could you read part of that?

Gayle: Okay. [She reads.]

Mr. Dillon: Wait. What does that say? Who wrote those
poems?

Student: Teachers and . . . Kids and teachers.

Mr. Dillon: Kids and teachers. We have several books on
the cart like that.

LaShonda reads, ". . . roll those big eyes, black gal. . .
."

Mr. Dillon: Okay, we'll have time maybe next week to look
at these books some more.

On the Telephone

In fourth and fifth periods I'm being very sneaky about the reading. It's working, cause I think I've got about half of each class that has spent at least fifteen minutes going through those books. I've been very very sneaky about it.

Except with Renee. I told her to go do it. I did that because she felt like I wasn't listening to her suggestions about what to do in the class; I had asked for those, so why wasn't I following up? She's very bright, and she was pretty bored with what had been going on. But I knew that she was very much a reader outside the classroom, and she is writing her own poetry. So while the other groups were working with questions, I knew that her group was almost done, so I gave her a letter that said, you know, I'd like you to spend your time today going through these books. I know you like romantic novels and romantic poets. And I gave her the names of a couple of poets, Levertov and cummings and Sexton, I think I told her. I asked her to look at the books and if she found a poem she really liked to write me about why she liked it so that I could help point her to other things she might like. And she did. She found an e. e. cummings poem that I'd never seen before. She copied the whole thing out and wrote a whole page of wonderful response to it. That was really cool. But she's the only one I've said, you know, "Go do it."

The others, it's been . . . I've gone up to them when they're doing something they're not supposed to be doing. And I'm like, "Well, there's a cart of poetry books over there, and it would be okay with me [laughs] if you would grab one of those for the rest of the period. You know, just so you're doing something that's connected with the class."

And Crissy, who told me that she never reads anything, spent half the period with a Maya Angelou book, and Trenda spent most of the period with a Nikki Giovanni book. And I've had four or five of them ask me if they can take the books home.

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Interview

In two of the first classes I took as an education student, there was research where they were talking about kids' attitudes towards school and about the way that they're taught, beginning in kindergarten, to separate work from play. And in talking to [my son] Joe, too, I can tell that there are very definitely times that he's supposed to work and times that he's supposed to play. And the work is associated with learning. And play isn't. And I think that's sad. And wrong.

Why is it wrong?

Usually when they're talking about play, it's the kind of activity-centered stuff in kindergarten, when they're exploring things. And it's the teacher-centered stuff, or worksheets, or things like that they consider work. And I think that quote-unquote play is more valuable.

Why? Why is play valuable?

Because they're looking at things they're interested in, and that makes more of a connection because it's something they want to be doing. And they're taught . . . Work has a bad connotation to it. It doesn't feel good to have to do the work, and they want to do the play. So I wanted things in my classroom to feel like play even when I knew it was quote-unquote work.

How do you think your students felt about that?

They resisted it. A lot of them did. Especially kids like Renee. Because they didn't feel like they were doing quote-unquote work.

You're saying that play is valuable. Are you saying that just because of the articles you read, or do you have some intrinsic sense of that? Where is this sense of the value of play coming from?

My experience in the classroom, with the work that I was supposed to be doing in there, . . .

Now, we're talking about you as a student?

Me as a student.

At what age?

Most ages. Mostly from about fifth or sixth grade on up. The work wasn't work. It was just figuring out what your teachers wanted and giving them that, and it was easy to coast through everything. And I got more out of, you know, making up comic books than the rules of writing assignments.

When did you get to make up comic books?

When the teacher wasn't looking. The things that I did on my own in the classroom were more valuable than the work I was supposed to be doing.

Those were play?

Yes. In the fifth grade, my best friend and I would get in trouble all the time from doing the comic books. We would pass them back and forth. He would do a couple of pages, and then he would figure out a way to get it to me while her back was turned, or he would leave it next to the pencil sharpener, and I'd go get it, do a couple more pages and send it back. And that's what I remember now. I don't remember anything else from fifth grade except one time, she explained what the weather map meant. When you're watching the six o'clock news and you're watching the weather man, and he's talking about the high and low pressure and the fronts and everything; she explained weather. And I didn't know anything about it, and I thought that was interesting. But I don't remember anything else from fifth grade.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Starting here, I need for you to count off by eight. [They count off]

Okay, everybody has a number. Group one, right here. [He points to the place where he wants them to meet. Students start to get up and move.] Don't move until I'm done. Group two, right here. Three, four, five six, seven, and eight. Now, lets do this as quickly and quietly as we can. Okay?

[Students move to their assigned places. Mr. Dillon distributes xeroxed pages to the different groups. Each group has a set of six poems. The sets are different, but there is some overlapping.]

Vonda is looking at a poetry book. Mr. Dillon takes the book, says "Not now."

Vonda: But it's a really good poem.

Mr. Dillon: [To the whole group] Okay. Let's give the instructions one time. I need everybody's eyes, okay?

You have six poems. I want you as a group to find one in there that you like. Or, find three things that you like, it doesn't even have to be the whole poem. And three things

you hate. [He writes on the board as he talks: three thing you like / three things you hate.]

Janice: That's a very bad word to use. [Mr. Dillon erases hate and writes *dislike*.]

Mr. Dillon: You need to assign somebody who has some paper to write these down. You have ten minutes to do this. You should be talking now. [They begin talking, reading the poems.]

You guys decide how you want to do it. If you want to have somebody read the poems aloud, that's okay. Every group has different poems.

[Crissy is looking at an annual.]

Mr. Dillon: Crissy, can you put it away please? You should only be talking to people in your group. And it might help if you turn around and face the people in your group. [Mr. Dillon walks over to group one. Several of them have something to say to him.]

Mr. Dillon: [To the members of the group] Just go ahead and start doing it.

[He leaves. They begin reading.]

LaShonda: These ain't poems. They stories.

Mr. Dillon hears her, looks back: "Write that down, LaShonda."

LaShonda continues muttering to her group members: "It don't have any meaning."

Another girl in group one asks, "Is there anything you like about it?"

LaShonda: No.

Mr. Dillon moves around the room, visits with different groups. "Okay, but why? Why do you like it?"

Rusty. We're done.

Mr. Dillon: Okay guys, I think you know by now that this is my favorite word. [He writes on the board, WHY!] Gayle found a line that she liked, and then she kinda figured out why she liked it. We're gonna listen to Gayle for a second. Shhhh.

Gayle reads from her paper: The reason I liked it was because it was like describing things in a weird way.

Mr. Dillon: Did everybody hear that? She didn't just write the line down. She explained why she was writing the line down.

"I like weird, that's one of my favorite words." So, that kind of thing. Don't just list. Try to think about why you like that line. Okay? Go ahead. I promise I'll never interrupt you again.

Crissy has the yearbook open in her lap looking at it. Rusty, sitting next to her, looks at it, too.

Mr. Dillon circulates, confers.

Gayle's group is working intently.

Renee gets up and goes over to Gayle's group, shows Gayle a poem. They talk.

Mr. Dillon is with the group in the far corner. LaShonda gets up, crosses the room to the corner where he is. They talk. She shrugs.

Mr. Dillon: "Why?"

LaShonda: "It ain't gonna hardly take five minutes."

Mr. Dillon: Are you done with . . . ?

They continue talking. She doesn't look at him. She picks up a poetry book from the table, flips through it noncommittally.

Mr. Dillon: [Standing] Okay, guys, about two or three more minutes. You gotta write some things down.

Crissy is looking at a poem now, "Janice Snow." She begins playing with her hair.

Voice: "He hit me." [Noise level has risen.]

Voice: "I am not a damn. And I am not it." Gayle is laughing. Widespread talking.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, guys, you have completely disintegrated. It looks like everybody's done.

Diane: Mr. Dillon, can I read one?

Mr. Dillon: Yes, in just a minute. Guys.

I thought you wanted to read it, Diane. You have to be quiet before they will be quiet so you can read it.

Okay, it's almost quiet enough. We're getting there. Wait. Wait.

[Quiet.]

Diane: This is called "Julie Snow." "It doesn't matter which boy takes me dancing. . . ."

Mr. Dillon: Was that one of the ones you liked or didn't like?

Diane: I liked it.

Mr. Dillon: That poem was in some other people's groups, too. Vonda's going to tell me why she liked that one.

Let's be quiet for Vonda, guys. I know it's hard, but we have to wait for everybody to quit talking. [Students quieten.] Now, go ahead.

Vonda: I don't know how to say it.

[Diane starts to say something. Mr. Dillon stops her until people are quiet.]

LaShonda: I know some people that act like that.

Trenda: Me, too.

Mr. Dillon: So how would we say that? Could we say that it reminds you of other things?

A jumble of voices.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, I'm hearing some great things, but I need to hear them one at a time.

LaShonda: The people I know that do like that, they don't even know they doing it.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, does anybody else have one they want to share from the whole group?

Wendy: "Jason Talmadge." [Pause] "I picked a fight with my stepfather . . . the hell he does . . . the judge said . . . you know I tried, kid, . . . the hell he did . . . why did they have me in the first place?

Mr. Dillon: Why did you guys pick that one?

Kevin: It has a lot of action in it.

Mr. Dillon: Action.

Janice: And a lot of emotion.

Crissy: They didn't ask to be here.

Mr. Dillon: What, Crissy?

Crissy: It's their responsibility. They didn't ask to be here.

Mr. Dillon: Whose responsibility?

Crissy: The parents.

Mr. Dillon: How about another group that had that poem in there? You guys had that one. Is that one you liked?

Wendy: Yeah.

Mr. Dillon: Why?

Wendy: Every once in a while I think the same thing . . . especially when they pick somebody else over you.

Mr. Dillon: What was the poet guy doing that helped you get there? How could we put it? He said something you had been thinking about or that you felt before?

Those are the poems that I like the best. Where they put down their feelings, and I can say I've been there. It reminds me of some feeling I've had before.

Okay, another poem?

Renee: I want to read one.

Mr. Dillon: Which one is it Renee?

Renee: "The Little Blue Engine." I'm reading this for Amanda. She's afraid to read.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, wait until . . . [Quiet.] Okay.

Renee: "The little blue engine looked up at the hill . .
I think I can, I think I can, I think I can . .
crash . . . thinking you can just ain't enough."

Mr. Dillon: We all know the first part of that story, we all had that story read to us in kindergarten. But what happened at the end of it?

Steve: He fell down and went boom.

Mr. Dillon: So he fell down and went boom? Is that what happened in the story we all know?

Several students: No.

Mr. Dillon: Well, wouldn't he retell the story in the same manner? Why would he take the story and change it that way? [Several students begin to answer.] Wait. One at a time.

Steve: Maybe he really didn't like that story, so he wrote it the way he wanted to write it, how he saw it.

Mr. Dillon: So how would we say that?

Steve: He wrote it the way he wanted it to be.

Mr. Dillon: Okay. [He writes this on the board.]

Crissy: He was tired of storybook endings.

Mr. Dillon: Okay. [He writes this on the board.]

Mr. Dillon: Yeah, Rusty. I saw you grinning when the train crashed. That kinda goes along with your negativity in a poem. Did you like this?

Rusty: Yeah, I liked it. At first I thought it was gonna be a letdown, but then . . .

Mr. Dillon: Well why did you think it was going to be a letdown?

Rusty: Cause . . . it was like a four-year-old's story or something, and . . .

Mr. Dillon: Do you think he did that on purpose, though? What would have happened if he had started out turning everything upside down?

A student mumbles something.

Mr. Dillon: So you're going along and the bottom drops out. Like the Twilight Zone. You know, everything's okay and then boom, right at the end you have a surprise ending.

Was there anything else about that one that you guys noticed?

Rusty: No, but I have a poem I'd like to read. "Ernest Mott." [He begins to read.] "When I was younger . . ." [He stops reading.] I'll start over again. [He has adopted a teacher tone.] Can I have silence? "When I was younger, mothers wouldn't let me play with their kids . . . one time I did run naked through the neighborhood . . . Now, after years of special classes . . . back to people who still have fear in their faces."

Mr. Dillon: Why did you like that one?

Rusty: I don't know.

Mr. Dillon: That one's a little different from the other ones. You have to know a lot for that poem to make sense.

[Mr. Dillon writes *thorazine* on the board. And *special classes*. They talk a little about these things.]

Mr. Dillon: Does anyone else have a poem they'd like to read?

Gayle: Yeah, but it's almost time for the bell to ring.

Mr. Dillon: That's okay, go ahead and read it right fast. [She begins reading.]

Mr. Dillon: Did everybody see the poem? This is Shel Silverstein. He did a drawing to go with it. [He shows the dog with two tails.]

Mr. Dillon: We have somebody here who wants to read a poem she hates.

[Vonda reads aloud "Ellen Winters."]

Diane: It's silly.

Crissy: It's not silly. Not at all. It's the truth.

In the Classroom

Late in seventh period, Mr. Dillon begins to distribute handouts that are printed on both sides. On one side, there is a poem titled "Van Gone." On the other side, there is a news article, with photo, about a traffic accident.

Mr. Dillon: Guys, turn over on this side. [He indicates the side with the poem.] We don't have much time, so we need to get started.

[He begins reading the poem.] "Sometimes, when the smoke curls around the street lamp / from the day's last cigarette, I see the fire . . ." He walks back and forth and then among the rows, reading.

After he reads, Rita volunteers to read the poem aloud:

"Sometimes . . . I see the fire."

Mr. Dillon: So who is this about?

Chuck: A smoker.

Ross: A dude in a car wreck.

Rita: Somebody named Mr. Dillon.

Mr. Dillon: Say his last name again.

Tamora: Dillon.

Mr. Dillon: Dillon.

Jordon: Is that you?

Mr. Dillon: Yes, this is me. What I want to do with you guys today is share with you how I wrote this poem. It's a way that can really help you.

[Suddenly it clicks in with the students that the news article and photo are about something that happened to Mr. Dillon. They begin talking, pointing at each other's handouts. They are wanting to read the article about the wreck. But he is moving fast. He glances at the clock.]

Mr. Dillon: This is yours. If you want to read about the wreck, take it home and read about the wreck.

Leroy (grinning broadly): Hey, man!

Mr. Dillon: You guys take out a sheet of paper.

Leroy: Paper?

Mr. Dillon: Everybody get out a piece of paper. While you get out your paper, I'm going to start talking. This part's just thinking, alright? You don't need a pencil and paper for this part; you just need to think.

I know you probably haven't done this since third grade, but I want everybody's eyes shut. [Moans and complaints.] Shhhh. Quiet. [They quieten quickly.]

Okay guys, now what I want you to do, I want you to think back. Obviously, this was something very important in my life, something that I'm never going to forget. [Students are very quiet.] What you're doing now is thinking of something in your life that you're never going to forget. If you don't want to close your eyes you don't have to.

You all have something. You all have something. Start writing. Write something down. Just something that comes to your mind. Just a couple of words. Don't even try to describe it yet, just write down something for yourself so you'll know what it is. [He is moving through this at a high rate of speed.]

Sophie: Write down what you feel?

Mr. Dillon: Write down whatever is in your mind.

Mr. Dillon: Does everybody have something? It doesn't have to be something bad. It can be something good. [He gives examples.] You can see it, feel it, touch it, taste it. You're there.

[Jordon mutters something. Several students near him laugh.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Jordon let's keep it clean. Now, what I want you to do, . . . Everybody, turn that paper over longways, like this. [He turns on the overhead. There's an example of what he wants them to do. A page, turned "longways," is divided into five columns. There is writing in each column.

What you're gonna have is this. . . . [He reads the column headings, pointing to them.] See, Hear, Taste, Smell, Feel. I like feel instead of touch. Because feelings can go there, too.

As you make your chart, keep in mind what you were thinking about.

Jordon: We're gonna write it down on the chart?

Mr. Dillon: Yeah. That's what you're gonna do.

Leroy: Do we write down what's up there? On that chart?

Mr. Dillon: You don't write down what I have up here. This was my chart for this poem.

Tamora: We write down what we saw?

Mr. Dillon: Yeah. You're gonna have a chart that says sight, hearing, . . . What you're gonna do is keep

thinking about whatever happened and start writing words down in the columns. . . . When you start going down the columns, think of everything that you saw, everything that you heard, it could be a noise. Whatever is coming to you, write it down. Don't stop with one or two, usually the best ones are the ones that come later in the list.

It can be people's voices. . . . Something you smelled.

[They are quiet. Jordon turns around and looks over his shoulder at the paper on the desk behind him, then turns back to his own paper.]

Mr. Dillon: Keep going. Don't spend time chewing on it. Even if it seems silly, go ahead and write it down. . . . We're not going to share these poems. Nobody is going to see these. This is for you.

[A few murmurs, an inaudible question.]

Mr. Dillon: Unless you guys want to share these, that's not going to happen. If it's something private, go ahead and write about it.

Be very specific. As specific as you can be.

[He is moving around the room but doesn't look closely at their work unless invited.] When you've got a lot of things down, look for words that are connected. Circle your favorite words. Sometimes you'll have words that come up more than once. In mine, the word *fire* came up twice, so I knew it had to be in the poem. And *sidewalk* and *upside-down*. And then I looked for connections with the other parts, things that looked like they fit together. [He refers to the overhead, pointing.]

Poems don't have to be about death or the love of your life or anything like that; they can be silly.

Once you have a few words that are connected, once you have a few words that really struck you, like you did when you were doing your found poems, write 'em out. Write 'em out together.

[He is circulating as he talks. Many of his comments to the class come following a brief exchange with a student.]

Once you feel ready, once you have a bunch of words together, go ahead and string them together in the form of a poem.

Mr. Dillon, conferring with Tosha: . . . in the form of a poem. The ones that you circled.

Tosha: Can we circle more than one?

Mr. Dillon: You can circle as many as you want to. Look at this poem. All I did was put these words together. I didn't really add that much.

Tosha: Can we add words?

Mr. Dillon: Yes, you can keep on adding words.

Interview

Work as I experienced it in school was too limiting to allow insight and real learning to take place at all. The way I experienced work was you read the chapter, answered the questions, or you just did things that were parroting information. And I realize that you can approach work in such a way that forces them to synthesize things, but I think that's still just figuring out what the teacher likes, what the teacher wants to hear. That was my experience as an English major. I dreaded classes where we only had two papers. Cause you had to write the first paper to figure out what the guy wanted.

You've used a phrase I'd like for you to talk about: real learning. What is real learning?

Real learning is when . . . I don't really want to say you figure something out for yourself. But that's a big part of it. Cause it'll mean more to you if you at least felt like you figured it out for yourself. If something feels like an insight to you, you're going to remember it a lot more than you're going to remember a chapter in the book, even if it's saying the same thing. I think real learning is more experiential, so in that way it kind of has to be play. Does that make any sense?

It's like that line you liked from my handbook: You don't teach mechanics how to fix cars by having them pump gas.

And I think that's why fourth and fifth period really got into the poetry. Because they had opportunities in class to do things that didn't feel like school work--looking through the books, reading poems out loud to each other, writing their own poetry. Those aren't things that normally get done. They felt like play. So they ended up being more on task than when I was trying to do things that felt like work to me. Like that day I went in to [laughs] teach "Lady and the Tiger."

You're laughing.

Yes.

On that day when you went in to teach "Lady and the Tiger," what was your definition of teach?

My definition of teaching on that day: I have some information I wished to impart to them or help them realize for themselves, and I wanted to structure the day so that would happen.

And what happened?

[He laughs.] Nothing.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Hey, hey. Look at me. How many people are stuck? How many don't know what to do with this?

[Sudden general talking.]

Mr. Dillon: Hands, hands, don't say *me, me, me*. [They get quiet.] How many of you have a poem of your own that's ready to go to draft right now?

[General talking again.]

Mr. Dillon: You want us to write one together?

[Several yeses.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay. [He picks up chalk and stands poised to write on the board.] Somebody give me a place.

A voice: The beach!

[Lots of calling out.]

Mr. Dillon: Wait. Shhh. Shhh. I'm not gonna make you raise your hands but you have to talk one at a time, alright? Now, somebody give me a place.

Chuck: New York! New York!

Mr. Dillon: [writing "New York" on the board] Someplace that everybody knows.

Leroy: SeaBreeze

Mr. Dillon: [writing "SeaBreeze" on the board] What's that?

Leroy: It's a beach in New York.

Rita: Rain forest.

[Mr. Dillon writes "rain forest" on the board.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, okay. Pick one for us to write a poem about. How many people want to do the beach? [Noise] We need to vote. The beach?

[They go through a rather noisy, but democratic, process of choosing the place that will become the topic of the poem. They narrow the choices to the beach and New York; then, the beach wins.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, it's the beach. What do you see at the beach? [He moves to another part of the board where he has already made a blank sense chart. In the column labeled Sight, he writes words and phrases as students call them out.]

sand

water

surfboards

[Lots of people call out simultaneously. Mr. Dillon is writing fast, getting as much of it down as he can. Frequent laughter among students.]

guys

girls

crabs

tan guys with shorts on

bikinis

g-strings

Mr. Dillon: What else, what else?

big waves

cocoa butter

birds

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Sound.

waves

birds

sting rays

Voice: You can't hear sting rays.

Mr. Dillon: In this poem you can.

fun

Mr. Dillon: What do you mean fun? What does fun sound like?

laughter

talking

humming

waves

Mr. Dillon: Give me something that describes how the waves sound.

crashing

Mr. Dillon: What else besides crashing? How about a word you haven't heard before that the waves might sound like?

windy

Mr. Dillon: Windy. I like that. Okay, what else, what else?

Leroy: Shells. You can lift them. [He makes the gesture of lifting a shell to his ear.]

Mr. Dillon goes to the next column: What do you taste at the beach?

salt water

salt

Mr. Dillon: What do you feel at the beach? Keep it clean, please.

bathing suits

Mr. Dillon: You feel bathing suits?

Molly: You wear them!

Mr. Dillon: Yeah, you're right.

guys on sand

[They are calling out from all over the room, but with little overlapping now. The activity moves at a rapid-fire pace.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Smell.

salt

Mr. Dillon: What do we taste at the beach?

salt

BBQ

fish

chicken

chips

Mr. Dillon: You guys are hungry. What do you think about at the beach?

drowning

eating

swimming

Sophie puts a hand up: The opposite sex.

Marcus. He said keep it clean.

Sophie: It is clean.

Mr. Dillon: Shhhh. Let's write a poem now. Which ones of these can we erase?

[Salt comes off the taste column. Some want to get rid of stingrays. Column by column, they decide.]

Jordon: You got the waves, why do you need the water?

Mr. Dillon: Do we need the guys' shorts and the girls' g-strings?

Chuck: Yeah! Yeah!

Sam: No! Let's take 'em off.

Marcus: He said g-strings. They ain't clean.

Harley: Erase bathing suits.

Leroy: Get rid of chips. You can't smell chips.

[Discussion, disagreement, laughter]

The list for taste is reduced to salt, BBQ, chicken.

Thinking becomes: eating, swimming, opposite sex.

Mr. Dillon: So, what can we do with this?

Jordon begins immediately to compose: Salt and sand and waves . . .

Molly: There were tan guy lifeguards with shorts on, in the water.

Leroy: Walking on the beach, you see g-strings.

Mr. Dillon: Shhh. Let the person who's talking talk please.

We need to find a hole [on the board] so we can write some of this down. [He transfers some words across columns to make a space for writing.]

Mr. Dillon writes: Walking on the beach

Mr. Dillon: Where do you go when you go walking on the beach? . . . Guys, we can't have eight conversations going at one time.

[As they call out from all over the room, a poem begins to take shape on the board.]

Mr. Dillon: What do you see, what do you hear?

lifeguard blowing whistle.

[Students are calling out; Mr. Dillon is writing rapidly.]

Walking on the beach
lifeguard blowing whistle
cooking chicken
humming,
swimming with the opposite sex,
laughing,
oily backrubs

Mr. Dillon: What do you hear? [The bell rings for end of class.] You guys have a good weekend.

Interview

I think for work to be real work in school as it stands now, it has to feel like play. What I'm trying to say is that these students were conditioned that all that was expected of them was to follow the rules and do these assignments that didn't really require them to learn anything, just repeating back like a tape recorder things that they had read or been told, and half the time they didn't even understand what they were saying.

Do you think they thought they were learning?

I don't think they cared. Some of them might have. And they didn't think it was fun. It was painful. And it shouldn't be painful. If it's painful, I don't think you're going to learn anything. So I guess that's what I mean by play. It should be enjoyable. I don't think it has to be difficult, as the word is commonly understood, to be worthwhile when you're trying to learn something.

That was an interesting qualifier. "Difficult as the word is commonly understood." What's another understanding of difficult?

Difficult in that it's hard to put yourself in a place where you can be open and receptive to cool things that happen when you quote-unquote are playing. Like the freewriting. When it first started out, they were all trying to write these declarative paragraphs that they've been taught to do

since the third grade. Or the people who were poets were just writing their little formula poems. But the writing they did that showed the real insight was when they were just letting go, just making a list or just writing things down as it first came into their mind. And it's difficult to get into that place sometimes, for a lot of the kids. They're so used to doing the work.

Real work challenges you to go beyond common approaches or solutions or methods. And it challenges you. Like if you're doing the sense chart, which a lot of them thought was pointless. If you really do that, it's hard. If you're really doing it. And it does yield real work, I think.

In Conversation

I dunno. I've been going over it and over it and over it. And I dunno. I feel like I've dug myself into a hole with this *Lord of the Flies* assignment. And I dunno. [Long pause.]

What do you mean "dug yourself into a hole?"

I just . . . I don't like the assignment. And they don't like the assignment, and they're not getting out of it what I thought they would get out of it. But I still feel like it needs to be finished. [Long pause.]

So we're gonna muddle through and finish it, go on to something else where [beginning to laugh lightly, sarcastically] I won't give them enough structure and they won't have any idea what they're supposed to do.

Explain that statement, please.

I dunno. I'm kind of feeling sorry for myself at this point.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Somebody explain found poetry. Leroy.

Leroy: When you take like words that you know . . . that you feel . . . I don't know. Like strong words that you take. I don't know. You jot down words . . .

Tosha: that catch your eye.

Harold: that strike you.

Mr. Dillon: What else?

Harley: Words that have . . . like actions. It goes with what you're talking about.

Mr. Dillon: We have been grumbling and moaning and dragging our feet through this [work on *Lord of the Flies*] for two weeks. Now, you have a choice. You can finish the presentations, and we'll make our little test, and you can say good-bye to Ralph and Jack and Piggy forever [cheering], or, I know you guys know how to do the found poetry. If you'd rather, you can take the books and do a found poem by the end of the period tomorrow.

Several voices: Found poem! Found poem! [Then an indistinguishable cacophony of voices.]

Mr. Dillon: How are we going to decide this if everybody's talking at the same time?

Tamora: We need to pick a leader.

[Several simultaneous suggestions.]

Mr. Dillon: Now, do you want to do the found poetry, or do you want to finish presentations and take the test?

Jordon: How are we gonna get a grade on it?

Mr. Dillon: Those of you who write a lot of poetry, what would be a good way to grade a poem?

Rita: Read it in front of the class and then vote on the best one.

Marcus: No, then it would be a popularity contest.

Sophie: You can't grade stuff like that. There is no right or wrong answer with a poem.

Mr. Dillon: How about this? [Mr. Dillon goes to the board, writes 100.] "You do it, you get this." [Then he writes 0.] "You don't do it, you get this."

[Many voices.]

Mr. Dillon: Sounds like two good criteria to me: You do it, and it has something to do with what you got out of it. Can we handle this?

Loud voice above the others: Yes!

Marshall: [Loudly] Found poetry!

Mr. Dillon: Vote, please. All for found poetry, hands up.

I can't count this. Everybody look at me. Put your hand up if you want to do it.

Wait! Not everybody had their hand up. There are people who don't want to do this. We have to find a way that's fair. There are people who have not done their presentations yet that would like to give them to the class.

[Noisy discussion.]

Mr. Dillon: We will finish the presentations. Then everybody will do on their own a found poem. That way everybody gets to share what they learned, but nobody has to take that test.

[Noisy discussion]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, how about this? We will hold the presentations to three minutes.

Marcus: This is all messed up.

Mr. Dillon: Marcus, why is this messed up?

Marcus: Don't nobody know what they want to do.

General confusion, voices from all over the room.

Mr. Dillon: Wait! Wait! [He grabs an object from the desk, raises it above his head, speaks loudly.] This is my conch. [Immediately, they quieten a little, look at him.] We will finish the presentations tomorrow in fifteen minutes. Then we will all write found poems.

Applause. "Yeah! Yeah!" General noise.

Molly: I'll just do whatever the assignment is.

In Conversation

I had no idea when I walked in the door seventh period that I would do what I did. I knew we were going to do presentations, but then . . . I wasn't happy with what was going on with the class. They weren't into the assignment; I didn't feel they had understood what they had read, or that some of them had even read.

For the past few days, things have been up in the air. I made an assignment that did not have clear enough directions. I thought they were clear enough for me, and they would have been for me because I would have thought it was interesting. But now that I really think about it, it was a boring activity.

And I have been struggling this week with "Is my authority going to be eroded if I let them off the hook with this because it's not working?" Are they gonna think, "Well, all we have to do is not participate and then we won't have to finish anything?"

I still don't know. But I made my decision today. I made a decision today when they were . . . I barely had control over the class at the beginning of the period. I couldn't get them to sit down. I couldn't get Tamora to get a piece

of paper out to write something down. She never got a piece of paper out. And then nobody would share anything.

And then I decided, right then, this is pointless, this is not how I want to be, I need to admit that what I was doing wasn't working and try something else. Because them getting something out of the book is more important than them finishing doing what I told them to do if it's not working.

What else is on your mind?

Ross didn't raise his hand for found poetry.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: What I'm passing out right now are the directions for the found poem. Most everybody has done one.

Greg: I didn't.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Greg, I'll come by and explain the instructions.

I had a problem yesterday when I did this. [He writes on the board: 100 or 0.] When a teacher stands up there and does that, what happens?

Harley: It gets you nervous.

Sophie: You don't care.

Harley: What that means is, it makes people want to do it.

Mr. Dillon: But are you going to want to do a good job?

Rita: No.

Jordon: It might make more people do the work. Actually, it might make everybody do the work if they're gonna get a hundred, but the quality of the work might not be as good as it would be if you graded it on a scale.

Mr. Dillon: Exactly. Okay. You got the point. Now I need everybody's eyes on this sheet of paper so we only have to go over it once. This sheet of paper that you have in front of you. We are not just going to turn in anything. We have

guidelines on here. The first thing you're going to do is choose what it's about. You're going to choose a theme, and I know you've heard that word before. I've got four things down there--a character, the ones we talked most about in class, Piggy, Ralph, Jack, and Simon; we also talked about the twins; if you want to do one about the twins, that's fine.

Does everybody understand what I mean by a theme? Okay. An object. Something that came up in everybody's presentations was the beast, or fire, or Piggy's glasses, or the island itself. A thing. Or, you could approach it another way, a main idea, which is kind of like the traditional idea of theme. It's the idea that you think the author was trying to get across when he wrote this book. And then I'll leave it open. If you have a better idea than what I have on the page, you can do that.

And then, choose at least five sentences. This is the first of the criteria, just to make sure somebody doesn't open the first chapter, write down the first five sentences and just turn that in.

When you choose your five sentences, you need two things. When you were looking for the sentences for the found poem, what were you looking for? You were looking for what strikes

you--an idea an emotion, a feeling, something that makes you say, "Bingo! That's what I want to do." You need to look for details. Don't just pick something that could be a sentence about anybody. It's a sentence that you know that that sentence is about that person. Does that make sense? Does that make sense, Jordon?

Jordon: Yes.

Mr. Dillon: Senses. When I read that poem--Ms. Scott read it to you, the one about the van--we talked about the sense chart and how that's a way to start poems. And then we did the poem about the beach and g-strings and the naked lifeguard. [Students laugh and say "yeah."] That was fun. And that's how writing these poems should be. To do that, you need to have words in your poem that talk about the senses.

[All students have their heads up. Mr. Dillon is walking as he gives the instructions, sometimes in front of the class, sometimes between the rows.]

Mr. Dillon: Are there any questions so far?

Sophie: Does it have to have a theme?

Mr. Dillon: It does have to have a theme. That's the first criteria.

Harley mumbles something, looks confused.

Mr. Dillon: The words that you choose to make your poem have to come from at least five sentences in the book. When you turn in the poem, you will turn in those five sentences copied out on a sheet of paper. And your poem.

When you did your found poems before, they didn't look like this. [He draws lines on the board that indicate the shape of a paragraph.] What did they look like?

Several, simultaneous responses.

Mr. Dillon: All right. Long lines, short lines, sometimes you'd have a break. [He draws lines on the board to indicate the shape of a poem.] That's what a poem looks like.

So, you're gonna have details, you're gonna have senses . . .
. . . Okay, let's get down to form and meaning.

When you find your sentences, get rid of the words you don't need. You don't need *a, an, the, it*; you don't need the words that you find all over the place in the newspaper covering up the images, the strong words, the verbs.

You need the details. You need to talk about the senses, talk about the things you can see, touch, taste, feel, smell.

It needs to look like a poem. It needs to not look like a paragraph.

It needs to have meaning. You're gonna know whether these poems make sense or not.

You need those four things: details, sense, form, meaning.

Erica: What do you mean by details?

Mr. Dillon writes on the board:

Piggy was a boy.

Mr. Dillon: Now, what are some details about the boy?

He writes on the board as students call out:

*Piggy was a fat,
whiney, know-it-all,
mature asthmatic*

Mr. Dillon: [He points to the first line.] This is general. I can say that you guys are all students. That's

general. But I can say your names, and that's detail. I can talk about your hair color; that's detail. I can talk about your personalities; that's detail. These [he points to the next three lines] are details.

Do you see the difference between a detail and something general?

Students: Yeah.

Mr. Dillon: So these are the four things: details, sense words, form, and meaning. If you have all four, you get an A. Three, you get a B. Two?

Students: C.

Mr. Dillon: One?

Students: D.

Mr. Dillon: Zero?

Students: F!

Mr. Dillon: Okay. That solves the problem. You can't just do it and get a hundred. You have to do it and follow the directions.

Interview

If you just ask somebody to remember something, or tell somebody that now they understand something, I don't think they've learned anything.

How do you know when you have learned something?

When it changes my mind. Or when it makes me realize something. When it helps make something make sense. When it lets me look at something in a different way. When it's very doubtful that I'll forget what I've come to know.

I think it helped that I had three years off. I would not be the same student that I am now if I had gone straight through. Because I was still very much involved with playing the game, even as a senior.

When did you start being suspicious of the game? When did you start questioning it?

Well, I had always felt superior to it, because I thought I had figured it all out. I don't know. It was before I went back to school. Working in retail might have had something to do with it. That whole environment is so contrived. I was a lot more cynical after I left the store. When I first started back to school, I think it could have gone either way, but I was lucky to have my first class with somebody like Dr. N. He pretty much refused to take a position on anything, so when he would discuss all these theories of

education, you kind of had to figure out what worked for you.

And he wouldn't hand me a paper topic. I'm used to being handed paper topics. I mean, it got to the point in English classes where I could come up with them by myself, but they were still . . . [Laughs] oh, God, I wrote a paper on Ironweed. I wrote a paper on the main character's hands and feet in their relation to his abandonment of his family and all this other crap. He was a baseball player and he ran away from his family. I've got the paper somewhere here, but it's a load of crap. I got an A. I had learned the kinds of things that they wanted to hear.

But then, I wrote a twenty-five page paper for Dr. Newman, and it was the first paper I had written in three years.

How did it feel to write that paper?

It was really different. Really different. I had to figure out what I wanted to say. And it completely changed from what I originally wanted to say. Cause I set out looking at all the research trying to prove my point. [He laughs.]

It's what you've been trained to do.

It's not the way to go explore an issue.

In the Classroom

Okay, this one's called "The Distant Drum." [He begins to walk and to read the poem. Almost instantly they settle into silence.] ". . . this is my voice, these are my words It is my fist you hear beating against your ear. . . ."

[Somebody laughs.]

Okay, that's what you guys are going to be doing today. Beating a fist against my ear. [A couple of students start to get out of their desks, making gestures with their fists.]

No, not with your real fists, with your poems.

[Laughter. He begins to distribute a handout with instructions for the found poem they will write today.]

You guys remember how to do a found poem, right? You're looking at something that's already there and pulling the words out that strike you. You have to take those words from at least five different sentences. So the first thing you need to do is grab these books and find your five sentences. Are we ready to start?

Students: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, pass the books back.

Message on Answering Machine

Greg wrote a poem, all by himself, on his own, last night. He turned in his book and his poem. It was a good poem. And I was very happy. And I had a better day today.

I don't really know why it was better. I took more control over what was going on. Some of them are still very reluctant to write, but we're gonna work on that. They had fun sharing the poems. And we're going to start putting together the anthology next week. That's pretty much it. Talk to you later. Bye.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon begins reading a student poem aloud. Within ten seconds, students are completely quiet. All but three are looking at him as he reads. Immediately, when he finishes, Greg starts applauding: "I like that."

Mr. Dillon: It was Greg's. He did a wonderful job. [Greg is grinning, nodding his head in agreement.]

Mr. Dillon: This is Jessie's. I want you to see how he started. . . . Can you see this? I want you to hear what happened as he. . . . [He reads Jessie's poem, a little more loudly this time.] Just in those few sentences, he goes all over the book . . . just really great.

And . . . [He looks through the stack of papers in his hand.] Sure you don't want me to read yours, Sophie? I really like it. [Sophie agrees that he can read it.]

Mr. Dillon reads: ". . . That pissed me off."

Tamora: Can I write something like that?

Mr. Dillon: Sure. These words were all taken straight from the book.

Here's one. I like this one. He walks between the rows of desks as he reads: ". . . dead body floats out to sea."

Jordon: That's violent.

Mr. Dillon: Very violent. But it was a violent book. Who wants to claim that one? [Justin claims it.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay. One more. And then we'll move on unless somebody else wants to read one. . . . He made it into something that sounds like he just sat down and wrote it. "The fatal unreasoning knowledge came . . . and Simon lay over the island and further."

Marcus: Deep.

Leroy: I want to write a poem. Cause I didn't get a chance to.

Mr. Dillon: Yes, you'll get to write one.

Interview

I think play is important in schools because if you give a kid something that feels like work, it automatically gets them in the mindset that they're doing work, and they will not be honest; they will not . . . They shut down and go on automatic pilot and do what they've been conditioned to do. Which is repeat back what they've been told, changing a couple of words and calling it something that they've said, which they're going to forget in two weeks or that evening. But if they have more space and more opportunity to think and make their own connections without somebody telling them what the connections are . . . I don't know.

I think play functioned in my classroom most effectively in setting up an environment where the kids didn't always know what to expect when they walked in the door. The only thing they knew to expect was that it wasn't the typical classroom of a typical day and they wouldn't be expected to do the typical things that teachers ask them to do. I think that was its main function. And it freed them up to be honest and more open and perceptive to things that were going on.

I don't really think that a lot of the work done in school is authentic. So anything that's the opposite of what's normally done in school, which most people would call play, probably will have a better chance of getting an authentic response. It's not authentic to talk about plot

and theme and all that other stuff, anapests and metonymy, synecdoche.

I think it's a question of goals, what my goals as a teacher are as opposed to most people's.

What are your goals as a teacher?

To help them think for themselves and challenge things they think they already know, and to have the desire to know things. That's cool. And to like to read and to like to write.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: This cart is full of books. All of these books came from the library. All of them are poetry books. You guys get to choose what you want to read. [A couple of whistles of approval.]

See these post-its? [He points to the post-its that are sticking up from marked pages in the books.] Every post-it was put in there by another student, somebody in fourth or fifth period. They've been looking at these books already.

You have a choice. You can work with somebody or by yourself. Spread out around the room.

What I want you to do is tell me "whatcha like." [He slaps the chalkboard at the place where he has written those words.] When you find a poem, decide what you like. Write it down. Do the same thing for poems you don't like. Okay. Go. [Students are out of their seats almost immediately, surrounding the book cart.]

Leroy has a book, is back at his seat.

Rita and Tosha and Harold are forming a group.

Leroy has been joined by Greg and Harley.

Justin will work alone.

Erica is sitting in her chair, looking forward, no book.

The crowd at the cart has thinned to two, Eric and Brian. Mr. Dillon is trying to help them select. He hands Eric a red anthology of contemporary poetry. Brian has a Janeczko anthology. They go and sit separately. Brian opens his book to a poem marked with a yellow post it. He looks at it, then extends it to Eric: "Read this."

Mr. Dillon writes on the board: *On a sheet of paper:*

5 things you like

5 things you dislike

Rita [to Mr. Dillon]: Do we get little sticky notes?

Mr. Dillon goes to the desk, gets yellow notes, takes some to Rita.

Mr. Dillon: Does anybody else need post-it notes to mark a poem? [Several hands go up. He delivers the yellow post-its.]

Harley is excited about a poem, reading it aloud to Greg and Leroy. He stumbles on a word. Leroy helps.

Harley: See, with poetry you just let your mind flow, you can't block out the words.

Erica has a book now: *Bring Me All of Your Dreams*.

Leroy and Greg are back up at the cart. Leroy chooses another book. Greg chooses another book. Leroy has the *Oxford Book of Love Poetry*.

Dan extends a poem to Leroy. Leroy looks at it.

Most of the noise in the room is from voices reading poems, reacting to poems. Greg is reading to himself, stops, grins; says to Leroy: "See! See!"

Greg points to the board: "We're supposed to be doing that, you know."

Leroy: Uh-oh.

Greg starts reading a poem aloud. He reads, then laughs. He is reading from *The Animal Kingdom*.

Eric has been looking at his book of contemporary poetry, stopping often to read, then continuing. He is leafing back and forth.

Brian is doing likewise with the Janeczko anthology.

Greg is excited again: "Hey, man, listen to this one."

Mr. Dillon has been circulating, arrives at the group of three boys. Leroy has found e. e. cummings' "May I feel . . ." Now Leroy is looking at a poem Greg has found, and they are showing both poems to Mr. Dillon.

Mr. Dillon: Yeah, I know both of them. [To Leroy] Don't just look for the dirty ones. [Mr. Dillon leaves to get more post-its from his desk.]

Leroy [to Greg]: You're not listening, see. Listen, look at this first line.

Harley reads: "The first girl I ever kissed . . ."

Dan and Sophie have pulled their desks side by side, are looking at a book together. Sophie is chomping on gum. Mr. Dillon stops, leans over their book, smiles as he reads. "Yeah," he says, and nods. Sophie says something. "Yeah," he says again.

Mr. Dillon speaks to Erica. She says "Uh-huh," doesn't look up from her book.

Harold: "I actually read this one, and I liked it." Mr. Dillon bends down and they talk.

Erica is calling Mr. Dillon. She raises her hand and he sees her, goes. She asks a question.

Mr. Dillon [to Erica]: "No, it's just if you want to use it."

He continues to circulate. Stops and speaks to Marcus. "Do you have somebody writing this down? . . . five things you like and five things you don't?"

Brian has gotten a new book: Ogden Nash.

Greg, Leroy, and Harley continue to look, read, laugh, share, read bits of things aloud.

Rita is reading aloud for her group. They watch her and listen. Rita stops reading in the middle of something, sets the book down. "Uh-uh. Can't do it. Just brings up too many memories."

Mr. Dillon reminds a group of three boys, "You gotta write down What made you stop and read the whole poem?"

Brian shows a poem to Eric. Eric, sitting in a desk behind him, leans forward, reads, then goes back to his own book.

Marcus: "Mr. Dillon, come here."

Mr. Dillon: I will.

Erica continues to read and write, bending over her desk.

Mr. Dillon goes to Marcus, answers questions.

Rita: I think what they're trying to say is. . . .

That's what I got out of it anyway.

Sophie gets up, skitters across the room, picks up Jordon's book, looks at his page. Then she hands it back to him, pushes his head forward, writes on the back of his neck.

Back with Dan, Sophie says, "Oh, wait, wait, wait." She leaves again, climbing over desks, visits Chuck briefly, climbs back over desks, consults with Dan. Then she says, "Have fun, Dan." She takes her book back to the cart, stops to tap Jordon's shoulder on the way.

Mr. Dillon circulates.

Greg is excited again, laughing, bouncing his head as though he were dancing as he reads a short poem aloud, rhythmically. Leroy and Harley laugh.

Rita is reading aloud to her group.

Justin raises his hand. Mr. Dillon goes to him, leans over, they talk.

Ross left the room at the first of the period. He comes back in now, goes to his desk, asks Brian, "What are we doing?"

Brian: Reading poems.

Mr. Dillon arrives to talk to Ross.

Greg is at the book cart, trading books again. He stops by Tosha and Rita's group on the way back, closes the book Rita was reading from, then picks up a paper they have been writing on, asks, "What's this say?"

Rita: If I Had a Brontosaurus.

Greg: What you want a Brontosaurus for?

Rita: Get out of here.

Mr. Dillon: Greg. Greg. Motions for Greg to follow him.
They go together to the cart.

Rita: Mr. Dillon, are you going to read these out in front
of the class?

Tamora, near the front, is singing.

A group has formed again at the book cart--seven people
trading books.

Greg is heading back to his place, puts his book on his
desk, then goes and sits in Tosha's seat. Tosha arrives,
grabs the back of his neck lightly. "Get out of my seat,"
she says sweetly. He gets up, goes back to his place.

Brian is writing.

Leroy is singing.

Everyone in my line of vision has an open book and is
looking at it.

Mr. Dillon: Guys. Guys. Everybody is looking at me now.
Not through the backs of your heads, please. Does anybody
want to read a poem you've found?

Six hands go up. [Noise.]

Mr. Dillon: I'm waiting, guys. Ross would like to read a poem, but we need it quiet.

Ross: "Boy, 15, Killed by a Hummingbird."

Students are all quiet as Ross reads: ". . . exploded his right eye . . . and sent the liquid streaming down his cheek. . . ."

Greg begins to laugh.

Mr. Dillon: As soon as it's quiet, Ross will tell us what's going on in the poem. Can you read that last line again, Ross?

Ross: I guess that word's *welding*.

Mr. Dillon: Yes, *welding*. . . . In the poem, who is *they*? Is it hummingbirds or is it something else?

Ross: Oh, "hovering over his hollyhocks."

Mr. Dillon: Anybody know what a hollyhock is? [Someone explains hollyhocks. Several hands are up to read.]

Rita: I want to read one.

Molly: I want to read two lines. [Molly raises her hand, shakes it.] Shut up, please. [She wiggles in her seat, waving her hand.] Hu, uh, uh. It's only two lines.

Mr. Dillon: Molly.

[Molly reads very fast.]

Mr. Dillon: Whoa, fifty miles an hour. Can you read that one more time?

She reads more slowly: "God wants no discord in heaven, and Satan has enough in hell."

In the Classroom

Marcus [entering]: Mr. Dillon, I wrote a poem.

Mr. Dillon: You did?

Marcus: Yeah, I want you to read it.

Mr. Dillon: Marcus, I'd be glad to read your poem. [Other students are entering. Sophie is talking about biology, grades coming up. Marcus hands a page to Mr. Dillon. Mr. Dillon reads. He and Marcus talk quietly, their heads close above the poem. When Mr. Dillon walks away, he takes the poem with him.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, let's get settled, guys. Greg. [He waits for them to settle.] I'd like to read you guys something that one of you wrote. [He begins to read from Marcus's page, then stops.] Let me start over. I need it quiet. It's called "At Last Pregnant."

He reads: "I got sick, really sick . . . He'll regret ever sexing . . ." And this is my favorite part, "but in private, I'll think of him more than myself."

A couple of voices ask, "Who wrote it?" Mr. Dillon shakes his head no, puts the paper on his desk.

Ross: Who wrote it?

Mr. Dillon: They can tell you if they want to. [Pause. No one speaks up.] The poet wishes to remain anonymous.

Interview

Why is poetry important?

Poetry is important for several reasons. The first reason it is important for me--as a person, not as a teacher--is that I can't really separate my experiences with poetry last semester from a confidence in myself that I've never really had before but that I got last semester. I mean, I've spent most of my life reading poetry, but I never really had the kind of connection I want these kids to have . . . with poetry until last semester.

Writing and reading poetry helped me get over things in my life that had been keeping me from doing things that I needed to do. Maybe not get over them, but deal with them. And it was fun. Finally. To read poems. I had read some contemporary poetry, but not an awful lot, and I never really enjoyed happy poems until last semester. I think that poems . . . This is going to sound kind of contrived, but they reflected and clarified feelings I've had--writing them and reading them--in a way that they hadn't before. I want my students to have that experience.

Classroom Handout

The Personal Literary Anthology

Purpose: To read widely so that you can discover writers that challenge and confirm your personality, writers that cause you to take a minute and say, "Wow! I never thought about that." Then you are to pick the best of the best that you have read and put it together as your own personal collection, more like a scrap book of your journey into reading than a formal textbook.

Rules: 1) Don't be bored. If you are reading something that really does not interest you, skip it. Keep searching until you find something you really like. 2) Keep a running record of your reading in your journal. For each work you read, make sure to note the author of the piece and its title and make some type of comment or reaction. For a work you don't like just jot something quickly that identifies why you stopped reading. For example, "Only read half because I was too confused to continue," or "The writing style was too slow," or "I couldn't identify with the characters." For a work you do like, try to get down more details about your gut reaction. These reactions will really help you when it comes time to write your preface to your anthology. Also, be sure to note the book you found the piece in, the location in the library, and the page

numbers so that you can find it again if you can't make your copy right away and think you might use it in your anthology.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Take a piece of paper like this, guys. Turn it sideways. Line down the middle like that. [There is something playful about the way he gives these instructions, demonstrates.] Now, you got a line down the middle. Left side, *reading*; write the word *reading*. R,e,a,d,i,n,g.

And *eating*. On the right side.

Okay, everybody's got a piece of paper, separated in half, *reading* and *eating*. Number it one, two, three under each one.

Tamora: Do they need to be big?

Mr. Dillon: Nah, they don't need to be too big. Okay, we're looking at *reading* first. I want you to think about what happens when you read. What happens to your mind? What happens to your body? One minute. [He pulls the stopwatch out of his pocket.] See if you can think of three things that happen to your mind and your body when you are *reading*. One minute. Write, don't talk. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. *Reading*. Go.

They begin writing. He says in a stage whisper: "Three things that happen when you're *reading*."

Harley: Uh, uh, uh, uh.

Mr. Dillon: Shh. Write, don't talk. [Mr. Dillon paces, watches the stopwatch.] Thirty seconds. If you've got three, see if you can get one more. 10, 9, . . .

Okay. Same thing for eating. What happens to your body or your brain? This time let's take only 30 seconds so we can get moving. You ready? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Okay, stop. Look at what you wrote down. Do you have the same thing in both columns?

Voice: No.

Mr. Dillon: Are they all different? What are some things that happen to you when you read?

Jordon: Uh, you focus. Focus, focus.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, focus.

Sam: You get hungry.

Mr. Dillon: When you read?

Sam: Yeah.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, you get hungry when you read.

Ross: Your imagination flows.

Mr. Dillon: Your imagination flows.

Leroy: Yawn.

Sam: Yeah.

Mr. Dillon: Yawn. Tired. I can't hear Erica. Erica, what was it?

Erica: Feel like you're right there in the book.

Mr. Dillon: Feel like you're right there in the book.

[Several people call out responses.]

Mr. Dillon: I need hands. What's something else?

Tosha: You remember stuff.

Mr. Dillon: You remember stuff.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, everybody. Tell us. What happens when you eat?

Leroy: Burp.

Mr. Dillon: You burp. What else?

Tamora: Your mouth waters.

Mr. Dillon: Your mouth waters.

Leroy: Smack.

Mr. Dillon: Smacking your lips.

Greg: Sleepy.

Mr. Dillon: Oh, there we have one: sleepy from eating, sleepy from reading.

Harley: Watch.

Mr. Dillon: What?

Harley: Watch.

Mr. Dillon: Watch?

Harley: Watch.

Mr. Dillon: Watch?

Harley: You look at you food.

Mr. Dillon: You watch what you eat.

Turn the page over. "Eating poetry." [A copy of the Mark Strand poem is printed on the back of the page he distributed. He begins to read the poem.] "Ink runs from the corners of my mouth./There is no happiness like mine." I want you guys to look at this. Think about what's happening to this guy as he eats the poetry. "I have been eating poetry. The librarian cannot believe. . . ./Her eyes are sad. . . ." [Mr. Dillon imitates the librarian walking "with her hands in her dress." Then he imitates the librarian "stamping her feet."] "I snarl at her and bark. I romp with joy. . . ."

Mr. Dillon: What happens to this guy?

Rita: He became what he read.

Mr. Dillon: He became what he read. What was he reading about?

Leroy: A dog.

Chuck: Food for thought.

Mr. Dillon: Food for thought. What does that mean, Chuck?

Chuck: It means that it makes you think.

Mr. Dillon: It makes you think? Okay. Why did he say *eating* poetry instead of *reading* poetry? Cause that's what he's doing. He's not really eating; he's reading.

Harley: He says ink is running from the corners of his mouth.

Mr. Dillon: Yeah. I mean, he's talking like he really is eating the book. Ink running from his mouth.

Tamora: He taking it in. Taking it in! Taking in what he reads.

Mr. Dillon: Taking it in. It's part of him now. It's inside of him now. And that's what you guys are doing with these books. Hopefully. . . . Hopefully you are eating them.

Interview

What was your definition of teaching on those days when they were engaging with poetry?

Setting up an environment for them to explore the books and make their own connections with them, rather than having me tell them what to read and what it means. And guiding them, talking to them. I got a lot done the last two weeks in fourth and fifth period 'cause I would have time to go talk to certain people who might be a little lost or who I hadn't spent that much time with so far. And it helped to have that time. You know, where I could just talk to a couple of people instead of having to be up front and talk to everybody the whole time.

In Conversation

I'm so happy for Stacy.

Tell me about Stacy.

She was one of those, "Oh, God, I can't write, I can't write, I can't write." And she was also the one "Lord of the Flies was stupid, the activities were stupid, the way we did everything was stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid." That was Stacy. Everything was stupid. But that day when we did the Players thing, she wrote about love. And one line in there was something like, "love is just this silly idea made up by some guy who didn't have anything better to do on a Saturday." And I pointed to that and said, "I love that. That's just great! That's just you. And it says so much more than saying 'Love is stupid.'"

And she's been writing on her own, on her own. She comes up to me every day with a new poem. And I'll point to another line and say, "You know what you could do here?" I think I told you about the lawn mower, cause it was a great beginning; it was sort of like Jim Hall's "White Trash" thing. Clean suburban lawn and then all of a sudden a frog gets caught in the lawn mower. And then I said, "Yeah, but right here, right here, where the frog gets into the lawn mower, it's got to go everywhere. I want to see where the pieces of that frog go. I want to see 'em on the roof, I

want to see 'em on the lawn furniture." She got so into it. Turned the frog into her sister, and she ended up with this poem about all the bad things she's done in her house, and it ends with the time she shaved her sister bald. It's cool. Really cool.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Guys, somebody turn the lights off. [On the overhead: Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" with a drawing of the Jabberwock. The overhead is done in blue, red, and black.]

Voice: Ross drew that.

Mr. Dillon: Ross did not draw that. I drew that.

How many people think a poem can teach you about grammar?

It can. This one can. [He begins to say the poem, reads through "and shun the frumious bandersnatch."]

Now, you can't really get a feel for what's going on in this poem, 'cause . . . Can somebody tell me why? Look up here. These words in red. What do they mean?

Sam: Stupid words?

Harley: Words that aren't cool.

Mr. Dillon: Does anybody have any idea what those words mean? . . . The poem is called "Jabberwocky," it comes from Lewis Carroll's book *Through the Looking Glass*, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*. Look up here at the red words, guys. And I've got them all bolded on the sheet. [Each student has a copy of the poem.]

What is *brillig*? What part of speech is it? Is it a noun? Is it a verb? Is it an adjective? You can figure it out.

Voice: It's an adjective.

Voice: It's a verb.

[Molly mumbles something.]

Mr. Dillon: Okay, Molly's got it, guys. Molly.

Molly: It was *brillig*, so it's describing. It's an adjective.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, how do you know that? What is *Twas* short for?

Molly: It was.

Mr. Dillon: Okay, so look guys. "It was *brillig* and the *slithy toves* . . . What's *toves*? Noun? Verb? Adjective?

Jordon: Um, um, noun.

Mr. Dillon: Why?

Jordon: It's a thing.

Mr. Dillon: It's a thing. The *toves*. What kind of *toves* are they?

Several students: *Slithy*.

Mr. Dillon: They're *slithy toves*. So, it's just like saying, "It was pretty damn cold, and the *slinky little beagles* were running and playing on the beach." Same thing.

[Someone points out that he used a "swear word."]

Mr. Dillon: Okay. "Darn." So, you see what's going on? You don't know what the words mean, but you still know things about them. Why?

Marshall: Because of the words that we do know.

Mr. Dillon: Because of the words that you do know and because of where they are. So when you're looking through these books and you come across some words in a poem that you don't understand, think about this. You can figure out what's going on by looking at the other words and looking at where they fall in the poem.

Okay, so, words a little bit later in there: "and as in uffish thought he stood." What is *uffish*? What part of speech is it?

Greg: It's a verb.

Chuck: It's a noun.

Mr. Dillon: It's a noun? "And as in uffish thought." What is *uffish* doing there?

Leroy: It's an adjective.

Mr. Dillon: Why?

Leroy: Because it's describing his thoughts.

Mr. Dillon: Describing his thoughts. Two more lines down.
"The Jabberwock with eyes of flame came whiffling." What's *whiffling*?

Marshall: Going by.

Mr. Dillon: Going by?

Marshall: Going by.

Mr. Dillon: So is that a noun, an adjective, or a verb?

Erica: A verb.

Mr. Dillon: A verb. Exactly. We still don't know what it means, but it's okay. We have some idea of what's going on.

Somebody says, "I don't like it."

Mr. Dillon: Oh, that's okay, you don't have to like every thing.

Try to look at a different book today than you looked at before. And it's okay for you to get with your friends to look at the poems, but we're going to do individual work for the last five minutes. [Students swarm around the cart of poetry books.]

On the Telephone

Jody is ESE. He spelled his name right, he got the date right, he wrote "7" for seventh period. This is what he wrote yesterday:

My picher are what I took when I was relaxsing on a big (something; I think it's sand dune, s-a-n-d-o-n-e). The water was as clear as glass. Boats going in and out of the getteys. Every time I look at this picher I thank how luck I am to be able to go out there some times. [Mr. Dillon has indicated spellings.]

I responded to all of their papers. When he said the water was as clear as glass, and the boats going in and out of the jetties, I marked that and said, "Beautiful." I said, "Can you talk about how you felt on the sand? What did the sky look like? Was there anything you saw that day that wasn't in the picture you took? Did you hear anything (birds? waves?)" I feel like I'm leading them a little bit, but I think it's okay.

And this is what Jody did today.

When I went to Panama City Beach. I was laying on the sand, looked up, big wide open sky. (I'm just gonna read it like he meant it.) I sat up wondering what it's like to be a bird or a fish. I looked across the water. It was like glass. You could see fish swimming free. Look farther out. Dolphins. Big, little, playing in the surf. I think if you go once, you will want to go again and again. There was a consistent noise of waves crashing at your feet. Birds in the sky like floating. Some people that live by the beach say that you have no more worries. The wind and the salt air can heal you of any disease.

Oh!

Okay. Jessie. This was his quick-write. About a table.

My grand father made it. Hand carved and it looked like an artist did it, but it broke and then he made another one when I was six. Then he died when I was eight or nine.

I wrote, "I like how that sounds" on 'hand carved' and 'it looked like an artist did it.'" I said, "How did it break? Can you talk more about what it looks like? Did you watch him carve it? What does it (the table) remind you of?"

Today, he circled all the it's and all the I's. Instead of one of the its he wrote *slinky*. And then in pencil he wrote under the stuff all on the same page,

The table my grandfather gave me it looked . . . [He wrote this word twice, and I cannot read it. emciulint.]

Immaculate?

Immaculate?

Maybe.

slink, curve, and beautiful [butiful] just the way a paid professional [peferinal] makes those tables. It broke because my dad ran out of the house. He was late for work and I left . . . I left I on the bottom of the . . . stairs? I left it on the bottom of the stairs! But my grandfather builds [b,i,l,d] another one when the old one broke, and I still have emciulent table. Every time I look at the table it reminds me of my Pa.

And then he did this:

Table

The table my grandfather gave me it looked immaculate [we've decided], slinky but beautiful, just the way carpenters make their

tables. It broke because my dad
ran out of the house (he was "late
for work"), I left it on the bottom
of the stairs. I was amazed
when my grandfather made me
a new one when the old one
broke and I still look at the beautiful table
and it reminds me of Grandpa.

So he turned it into a poem.

Uh-hmm.

Without your telling him to?

Uh-huh.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: Okay, look in your folders. The first thing that is in your folder is what? Somebody tell us.

Voice: I see, I smell, I taste, . . .

Voice: Therefore, I am.

On the Telephone

This is Jessie:

My mom discipline. You know I hate it
brother looking at the floor
screaming, yelling, crying
taste fear and Coke
feeling stupid, sorry for my brother
tired, unwanted, . . .

Interview

I think the things that I did in the classroom that felt like play got more honest responses from the kids, because since it didn't feel like work they didn't tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. And I think they surprised themselves. Especially with things like the found poems when they heard how good they actually were. And not just the found poems, also the things they had written.

I think a lot of them came to value this work because finally, they were having a positive experience in the classroom. I think that was most of it for about half.

And what made it positive?

That um . . . That they felt like they had some control over what they were doing, and they knew what they said was going to be valued. You got praise if you were giving me your feelings and not what you thought I wanted to hear. I think a bunch of them were impressed with the writing of other people. I think that played a big factor. It wasn't just that they were surprised at their own writing. They appreciated everybody else's too. And they wouldn't have been able to do that if I hadn't given them opportunities to play and to share their writing in class.

In the Classroom

Mr. Dillon: In your preface, you have to talk about every poem that you put in the book . . . talk about what the poem makes you do, what it makes you see, what it makes you feel. Not just that it's cool. Of course it's cool, or you wouldn't have spent all that time typing it if it wasn't cool. I want to read you guys something. Fourth and fifth period have already finished their anthologies; they started on them sooner. Here's what you can do instead of putting "I liked it. This poem was cool."

[Mr. Dillon reads from Rusty's preface, about Ginsberg's "Howl"]: "If this poem was a god, I would worship it," [Silence as he reads the rather extended eulogy to "Howl."]

If you want to say it's cool, say it's cool like that. Tell me it's that cool, don't just tell me it's cool.

On the Telephone

Oh, you know what Lavonne did?

What?

Her preface is a found poem from all the poems that she put in.

You *must* love it.

I do.

I walk into a room just as cool as you please.
I've made me a moon-catching net,
and I'm goin' huntin' tonight.
There's too many people in this tub,
there's too many elbows to scrub.
When the light is green, you go.
When the light is red, you stop.

There's a lot of Shel Silverstein in it.

I shot an arrow toward the sky,
it hit a light cloud floating by.
The baby bat screamed in fright.

What did the carrot say to the weed?
What did the paper say to the pen?
Grandma sent a hammock.

I mean, some of them don't really flow like the others do.

The good lord sent the breeze.

Bob bought a hundred dollar suit
but couldn't afford any underwear.
Looks like what drives me crazy
don't have no effect on you, said the lady

God, she's got the tiniest handwriting.

On the Telephone

From informal polling, I think most people are putting in some poems that they've written themselves. In the anthology.

You want to know how I responded to Luanne? She was the one who put in eight poems by herself, one poem by another student, and one poem she just grabbed from somewhere.

How did you respond to her?

She's the one that writes all those, uh, heart, part, cry, die poems. And what I did . . . I was wracking my brain to come up with a tactful way to tell her to not, uh, be satisfied with the poems she has written. And, [He finds his letter to her and reads:]

Dear Luanne,
I'd like to show you something.

I used to see
something in your eyes.
Sweet love captured my soul.
Sent from up above.
It goes from your body to mine.
I hung before your love,
holding you tight in your dreams.
I came to see
all of the real things
you are made of--
hurt, pain, sorrow, and
memories.

Tears
falling down
endlessly spell your name.

And then I said,

Do you recognize these words? They are all yours from the poems that you included in the poetry collection that you wrote. All I did was pick out the lines that really jumped off the page at me and sounded straight from your lips. I know it doesn't look like your poetry normally does, but try it on and walk around in it for a while. You might see that it fits you.

I love that you enjoy writing your poems, but once in a while, put down the pen and pick up a pencil. Learn to play around with the words on the page and that no poem is ever really finished. Remember that it's usually the line you love the most that you probably should think twice about leaving in. And always continue to write from your heart, in your own voice, which has sung to me from the pages of your collection.

Cause I mean in every poem, there's one line [pause] that's good.

And what you did was pull out those lines, because in a way, all of those poems are one great big poem, all mish-mashing the same stuff.

Yeah, they are. He broke up with me; he left; now I'm sad; I want him back.

I mean some of those lines really did jump out at me, the "tears falling down endlessly spell your name." "I used to see something in your eyes." I like a lot of them, but you've gotta wade through. . . .

Mr. Dillon's Journal

I am reminded of all the amateurish attempts that the kids showed me during my time there. I think about Luanne's "heart/apart," "cry/die" type of rhymed nothingness and Irene's formula poems. There were always flashes of something real and deep in these poems, just as there were in all of the I AM poems that I had them write. I am glad Lu was happy with the found poem I made from her work, and I am also glad that she saw it as something that still belonged to her. She said, "I like it but I don't know what I am going to call it yet."

I hope I can learn more strategies to help the kids get over the obsessions with rhyme and hackneyed images that plague them. I was frustrated during most of my time there because I am really unsure of how to teach revision. I got some really good techniques--responding with questions, the modeling, and having them peer-edit, but I did not always convince them of the necessity of revision. I hope I can learn to talk about it in a way that will be less threatening to my students and in a way that will let them see that everything really is just a draft.

Post-InternshipMy Journal

High School / 10:35 AM

Warmth and shade on a brick wall under a palm tree. I just spoke briefly with Ms. Scott. She tells me that Calvin is xeroxing. He doesn't plan to enter the fourth-period classroom until about fifteen minutes into the period. Apparently, this has been carefully orchestrated.

His internship with these students ended over a week ago. They have invited him back. They have something they want to give him.

So here I am feeling wonderful, surrounded by gentle sounds of bird and wind--a pleasant wind that rises and falls. I'm looking forward to today.

A bell rings. Motions. Voices. I'm at an edge of this complex of buildings, near Ms. Scott's usual room, rather than the room where seventh period meets.

Another bell rings. The passageways are clearing. Scamperings. Isolated voices. "Hurry up, girl! It's time to get to class." "I'm already late now. No need to hurry."

The sounds of birds predominate again. Ms. Scott has closed her door. I deliberately haven't asked to sit in there until Calvin comes. There's something personal about what's going on here today. Although Calvin has invited me to be a part of it, I'm aware that I am again an intruder.

Ms. Scott's door opens. Students emerge and walk across the grass. Ms. Scott follows them, a camera in her hand. "This is for Mr. Dillon." They form a group between two trees, arrange themselves. I take pictures of her taking pictures of them.

They go back into the room. Ms. Scott indicates to Mr. Dillon down the walkway, "Five more minutes."

Moments later, a boy leans out of the door, peeks to see if Mr. Dillon is coming, reports, "He's hiding behind the corner." I guess he is. I saw him, but now I don't.

There is excitement here. I feel lucky to witness this. Ms. Scott's door had closed again. Now it reopens; three heads peer out. "Do you see him?" Then they pull back in, shut the door.

I see Mr. Dillon now, leaning against the wall, looking in the opposite direction from me, one leg crossed in front of the other. I know he's nervous and happy.

In the Classroom

SURPRISE!

Bernie: Mr. Dillon, we made a book, an anthology, for you. And, why we made it, um . . . I guess it's because we want to show that we appreciate what you've done for us [pause] and opening our eyes to poetry. And so here's the book that we made.

The class applauds; a few whistles. Bernie hands the book to Mr. Dillon. Several students call, "Speech! Speech! Speech!"

Students say they will read their poems (some of which they have collected, some of which they have written themselves) aloud.

Bernie: The first one's called "Why." I wrote it myself. [He reads the poem, which pokes gentle fun at Mr. Dillon's persistent use of the question "Why?"]
By Bernie H. . . . , written for Mr. Calvin Dillon. And this is the note I wrote to go with it.

Dear Mr. Dillon: I will always remember your teaching style. I want to thank you for opening my eyes to the world of poetry. You have changed my whole view of poetry. Before you came, I rarely picked up a poetry book. I just want to thank you very much. We will miss you, Mr. Dillon.

Applause.

And this is one is . . . "My Art." He reads, "Like a lily in a barren dry field"

He passes the book to a girl beside him, and she takes her turn reading. Applause. The next person takes the book. "It's called. . . ."

They continue to pass the book around the room, each student reading either a collected poem or an original piece contributed to the book, many of them also reading the note they have written to Mr. Dillon. Applause follows each reading.

Dear Mr. Dillon, Where should I begin? The first time I learned we were going to have an intern, I went, like, "Oh, no." Now I wish you were still here with us. The way you came about teaching was, unbelievably, you made the most boring things be fun. . . . I will never forget you. I wish you the best of luck in your teaching career.

"I don't have to do anything but stay Black and die. . . ."

Dear Mr. Dillon. When I first met you, I knew you were going to be a great intern. When you teach, you are outgoing and enthusiastic. I love your philosophies on learning and teaching. You taught us things without giving us boring busy-work, and you discussed everything afterwards so we understood everything. I know you will be a fantastic teacher. I only wish I could have you as a real teacher for the whole year. I wish you lots of luck in your teaching career.

Dear Mr. Dillon. You are the first person who opened my mind to poems. I was going to write you a poem with a lot of love, but I couldn't write one. And since I'm not a natural poem writer, I'm writing you this letter. I just want you to know that I appreciate that you never gave up on me, no matter what. And you've given me hope. Thank you very much.

We've had some teachers who say the golden rule, but there is one teacher who doesn't let us act like a fool.
He makes us think. . . .
This teacher gives us hope, with dreams we hold inside, tells us we can do anything if we don't run and hide.
. . . I'll tell him straight up,
he's one of the greatest, like a magical cup.
. . . . a great teacher who opened our minds,
. . . . who inside is a student himself.

Mike is the last reader: This is called "Things I Have Received."

. . . . imagination
a gift that has been given to me by
someone of splendor and intelligence,
a gift that I cherish and hope to pass down
someday to someone that has an empty space that
it can fill up. I have received many things
. . . names, people, words.
If I can make an impact on someone's life,
. . . the bearer of this secret power
. . . I would know that I had done something useful.
I would like to thank that person who . . .
came into and out of my life
not by force, but to pass on the gift of poetry,
of thought, the freedom to write what's on your mind,
to not always follow the rules. . . .
Thank you for the gift I will hold in my heart
till I am free from this world and then beyond
to share with the stars. . . .

Mike: That's by me. For Mr. Dillon.

Applause, then a general call for "Speech!"

Mr. Dillon: I don't really know what to say, guys. I am going to remember you all. I miss you a lot already. Thank you very much for the book. And now, you can have yours back. Everybody has a letter. From me.

Applause. Whistle.

He returns their anthologies, and students distribute refreshments. They are strangely quiet. Small motions, quiet conversations, then silence. They are looking at their individual letters from him.

Mr. Dillon: Gosh, I wish you guys were this quiet when I was teaching.

"We're eating."

"Oh, so that's it."

But that's not it.

Mr. Dillon announces that he has written a poem that he will read. Applause. Cheers. It's about you, fifth period, seventh period, and Ms. Scott.

The bell rings while he is reading. He continues reading.

No one moves.

Mr. Dillon's Journal

I wish that I had done more listening to them instead of pushing them to analyze and synthesize everything that came out of their mouths. I have learned through this internship to recognize insight and work even when they aren't dressed up real pretty in striking insightful phrases or academic discourse. I am learning what real work looks like.

* * * * *

Poetry was the way inside these kids for me. I could hand them or read them something and share in that moment an understanding with them of what poetry does and is. I think that in those moments they saw what I wanted them to see: that poetry is a pure form of communication--it gives the reader more than a theme and a plot and a denouement--it translates feeling and experience in a way that allows them to be shared--and here and there I had private and public moments where there were all kinds of sharings happening.

* * * * *

The success I had with my students was the result of my spending time with them, finding out who they were and what was important to them. That was the only way that I could help them discover poetry. I acted like a real person in the classroom, and I was very much unlike any of the other teachers that they had experienced in the past because I did just that. From the way I responded to their papers (asking

questions about what I really wanted to know or asking to see in their writing what they hadn't shown me, never correcting spelling or grammar) to the way I showed them that I really did care about them telling me things that they cared about, I gave them the safety that I talked about in my journal last semester.

I think that one of the most important things I've learned this year was how to make a classroom safe. There is no way in hell that I could have gotten the honesty and authenticity that I got from these kids if they did not feel safe in the room. They knew that even though I would want them to back up an opinion, they would not be ridiculed or chastised for voicing it in the first place.

They knew that they could put anything down on a piece of paper and I would not rip it to shreds, but more important, that I would look beyond the words and into what they meant to them, the feelings and thoughts behind them. I think that was the most important thing that I taught these kids--that what you have to say is more than just the words on the page that you write down the first time. This is important because it frees them from feeling helpless about their writing and opens up the possibilities of revision and growth. I learned from these kids that I need to struggle constantly with my tendency to hope for the best and not take the necessary steps to ensure its occurrence. I learned that cliches about teaching are cliches because

they are true--relevance, planning, and variation of activities are not formulas for success or simply buzzwords--they are facts as basic and as true as the law of gravity. They are beyond debate.

I learned that all the theorizing about professionalism in teaching and maintaining a distance between you and the kids that you teach are just people struggling with the task of giving yourself to 120 people a day and still having something left to go home with after school. I learned that you have to let the kids inside you if you are to get inside them. You cannot and should not be their friend. You must, however, be someone who treats them like who they are--real people with important things to say and to do. In teaching, you must first pay attention to content and ignore form, whether you are dealing with a piece of writing or with a person. I learned to respond to people this semester in the same way that I learned to respond to their writing last semester--like everything and everyone is a draft with the possibility of revision. I feel that I helped these kids revise themselves as much as I helped them revise their writing. I know I did my job.

CHAPTER 4
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Teaching of Poetry

Poetry in Crisis/The Broader Context:
A Review of the Literature

In Mr. Dillon's classroom, students learned to love poetry. There is considerable evidence, however, that most high school students don't like poetry. Many, in fact, actively hate it, but they were not born hating it. Children generally love verses, rhymes, and lyrical language. High school students have learned their antipathy. When Robert Burroughs was stimulated to conduct his brief case study of Jessie, he was responding to a sense of this acquired dislike:

I had had him a semester earlier in a journalism class and had gotten to know him quite well. We had been talking recently about physics and poetry, both of which he hated. The reasons that he gave for hating poetry, though, led me to believe that he was being induced to hate it. He mentioned how he hated teachers dissecting a poem through forty-five minutes of discussion and then requiring a three-page paper on the carcass. Besides, he had said, there seemed no point to writing, or even discussing, what you might find during the dissection, since the teacher had already determined what you ought to find. (1977, 48)

Bettye Spinner began her study of adult readers of poetry with a review of research that led her to see the problem like this: "Despite early childhood pleasure in experiences with verse, most children grow to exhibit

increasing antipathy to poetry during their adolescence. By the time they enter high school, research shows, students rank poetry as the least liked literary form. They view its language as inaccessible and esoteric and consider poetry generally irrelevant in their lives" (1990, 439A).

Students are not the only ones uncomfortable with poetry. Many teachers are intimidated by poetry and avoid teaching it. Parker found teachers willing to admit being "terribly anxious about teaching poetry" (1977, 7). These anxious teachers further admitted that they did not read or write poetry themselves except by necessity.

At least one pair of studies, examined conjointly, suggests that some teachers may feel they are teaching poetry thoroughly and effectively, while students report otherwise (Stensland 1958; Compere 1952). McAlpine's 1978 study confirms this possibility. Studying both teachers and students, she found that the two groups' perceptions of existing poetry instruction differed considerably; teachers seemed to think they were doing a good job; students disagreed.

Poetry is one of humankind's most ancient modes of expression. It has figured prominently in oral history, ritual, drama, and personal expression through the centuries. In addition to its own aesthetic value, many claim that the experience of poetry can enhance thinking skills. In George Gopen's much discussed article, "Rhyme

and Reason: Why the Study of Poetry Is the Best Preparation for the Study of Law" (1984), this Harvard law professor argues that the study of poetry sharpens powers of inference and logical thought. He describes how he uses poetry toward that end in his own teaching.

With so many indications of the potential value of poetry, why are many teachers and students indifferent, intimidated, or antipathetic? How might high school teachers address their own and their students' discomfort with poetry?

As a poet and a teacher of poetry, I was already raising these questions before I entered Mr. Dillon's classroom. I did not expect to find there a concrete model for resolving these dilemmas. It was a fine surprise.

Studying the Studies

In a search of the literature addressing this problem, I have examined a range of articles and dissertation abstracts and have read one dissertation in its entirety on the subject of teaching poetry in the upper secondary grades (8th-12th). From this review, I can make several global observations:

1. Most of the research done in this area has been quantitative and experimental.
2. Most of the studies have been of a limited nature, and they shed little light on the profoundly problematic condition of the teaching of poetry today.
3. Across studies, there are contradictions concerning poetry preferences of adolescents.

4. Across studies, there is some consistency regarding the significance of affective response.

Many of the available studies examine responses to a single poem (Burroughs 1977, Cornaby 1974, Faggiani 1971, Lamb 1972, Murray 1992). Many others involve six poems or fewer (Colvin-Murphy 1987, Cowgill 1975, Dilworth 1974, Dilworth 1977, Hoffman 1971, Pak 1990, Quast 1990, Stephan 1992, Weiss 1968). These studies have the additional limitation of a very short "treatment time"--from sixty minutes (Quast 1991) to four weeks (Murray 1992), with most requiring only a few hours. Furthermore, some studies look at the responses of a half dozen students or fewer (Burroughs 1977, Murray 1992, Stephan 1992). These studies claim generalizability--a claim necessitated perhaps by the positivist environment within which they were conducted. In fact, these studies tell us little that is convincing about the general state of poetry teaching or students' responses to poetry as a genre. Nor, unfortunately, do they give us richly detailed reports that might take us deeply enough into the particular to allow us that paradoxical experience of the universal.

In his somewhat broader 1969 study, *The Effect of Author Biography upon the Comprehension and Appreciation of Poetry*, Larry Andrews presents twenty "randomly selected" poems to two classes of average-ability tenth graders--an experimental group and a control group. His findings indicate that inclusion of biographical information about

the poets makes no difference in students' comprehension of poems, but it does have a positive effect on appreciation of the poems. This may be worthy of note as we look for ways to create contexts for the teaching of poetry.

A few studies, however, go further in their attempts to be comprehensive, most notably Erickson (1969), Nelms (1967), Travers (1984), and Vogel (1989). Both Erickson and Nelms studied student preferences. Erickson asked 751 eighth-grade students, their 20 English teachers, 35 student teachers, and a panel of English educators to indicate their preferences among 20 sets of poems, three poems per set. Choices made by adults were almost exactly opposite those of the students. Students showed a heavy preference for metrically regular, rhymed poems in conventional forms; adults preferred the opposite. The study led the author to contend that

until teachers can show a genuine respect for the literary tastes of their students, however far they may deviate from the teachers' tastes, normal development of taste may be impeded or completely frustrated. (1969, 1684A)

The Nelms study, which asked a panel of 16 tenth graders and a group of seven "sophisticated" readers to respond to 120 poems, drew different conclusions about students' preferences:

There was no evidence in this study to support the usual contention that students prefer poetry with regular rhyming schemes and rhythmic patterns. (1967, 3153A)

The study also noted that "modern poems rated high by the sophisticated readers seemed to appeal to the students" (3153A). In general, however, there were differences in the choices of students and adults. Students responded more to subject matter and seemed to prefer narrative to lyric forms.

Studies of student preferences, however inconclusive, may offer teachers clues about where to start instruction in poetry. Ultimately, however, we have to wonder: To what extent are these preferences the result of prior school experiences with poetry? How might preferences change with different kinds of instruction? How does student taste in poetry evolve? In other words, rather than simply ask, "What do students like?" we need to also ask, "What might students like if given different kinds of experiences with poetry? What have been the limitations on students' experiences with poetry, and what are the possibilities for liberating meaningful response?"

Vogel's research took a significant step in that direction. It was designed to determine how poetry might be interwoven with other aspects of the curriculum in such a way as to become a "natural" way of thinking and talking about other forms and subject matters. He provided a teacher with 400 poems from which she selected the ones she would use. She chose, for example, poems about people to accompany the study of characterization in fiction, and she

chose narrative poems to exemplify elements of plot and setting. For a full semester, Vogel observed three of this teacher's classes, in which students experienced a wide range of poetry.

Poetry did, indeed, seem to become "natural" in these classrooms. Students accepted the poems, responded to them in personal ways both in writing and discussion, and they wrote poems of their own with apparent enthusiasm. Vogel reported that the use of poetry in the classroom did not involve grades or testing, that there was little emphasis on discussion of specific literary techniques, and that responses to poetry were largely personal. Students exercised considerable freedom of interpretation and expression.

Bettye Spinner's findings resonate with Vogel's observations. In her study of adults who sustain an interest in reading and writing poetry, she determined that "independence remains the key: in expression, in interpretation. Disenchantment with poetry followed imposed controls" (1990, 439A).

Vogel's research points in promising directions. Its qualitative approach seems well suited to investigation of the complexities of a crisis in the teaching of poetry. Its thick descriptions and the transcriptions of classroom talk are dense with clues about how to make poetry less alien in the lives of adolescents. Its observations over time

suggest methods for increasing our understanding of how responses to poetry evolve. It takes us deeper into the relations among students, poems, and curriculum.

Molly Travers (1981) calls specifically for studies of this sort. She contends on the basis of her own research and an extensive review of the literature that in poetry teaching, the teacher--not the method, the ability of the students, or the choice of poems--is the critical factor. In her study of several classes taught by different teachers, she suggests that, "When classes as a whole liked or disliked poetry lessons, the influence appeared to the teacher. . . . The one class where every pupil liked poetry lessons had a young scientist without any training in literature as their teacher" (1984, 369). Travers suggests that "detailed analyses of individual teachers' poetry teaching would contribute to this field of inquiry" (1984, 379), and she calls for use of ethnographic methods of research. To date, with the exception of Vogel's work, this call has remained essentially unanswered. The study of Mr. Dillon offers one fragment into the void. Others, hopefully, will follow.

Meanwhile, a number of teachers have reported their own successful strategies and contexts for generating enthusiasm and thoughtfulness about poetry (Atheneses 1992, Cox 1991, Gorrell 1991). Perhaps we should pay closer attention to well documented self studies. I suspect that many of the

more "scientific" studies are less useful than what these practicing teachers are trying to tell us. The best of these practicing teachers' reports are generally documented with thick description and samples of student responses in a variety of forms. Perhaps these teachers should now become subjects of the kind of in-depth case study Travers recommends.

There is one consistent thread that runs through the findings of studies addressing the teaching of poetry in grades 8-12: attention to affective response is important. Spinner calls for "affective response before cognitive analysis" (1990, 439A); Pak calls for "developing an approach to the teaching of poetry which . . . encourages students' intuitive responses to a poem" (1990, 2256A); Quast reports that reliable predictors of appreciation of poems include "emotional involvement . . . and use of emotions to understand metaphors" (1991, 451A); Colvin-Murphy recommends "writing based on subjective reactions of individuals" as a way to help students construct meaning from poetry (1987, 1718A); Maase (1972) also urges the engagement of the affective domain.

In his 1971 study, Daniel Langton, responding to evidence of "an indifference [to poetry] bordering on hostility . . . fostered in the young by current methods of curriculum selection and teaching practices," searches for deeply rooted societal sources of the problem. He observes

that "the most primitive societies on the earth today, societies with scarcely any possessions, no settled homes, no written forms of their languages, possess poetry in abundance," while in technically advanced nations, poetry languishes (1970, 3295A). Langton's study "explores the circumstances of the poetry of primitive people in an attempt to discover what we may have lost as we gained technology and written language" (1970, 3295A). His evidence indicates that "a society which sees poetry as part of life, as ever-changing as is life, will always have a successful poetry" (1970, 3295A). His recommendations include opening the doors of the school to "all song." There should be, he asserts, "at least as much learning by the faculty as by the students," with teachers receptive to what students perceive as poetry (1970, 3295A).

What are the ways in which teachers might help to heal a division between poetry and the human spirit? How can we make poetry "a part of life" again? These are, perhaps, the critical questions. The challenges to research are immense.

Implications for Practice

If we consider the studies that go beyond severe limitations of time and scope, we can identify several strategies that seem indicative of effective teaching of poetry. In these studies, successful experiences with teaching poetry

1. offer exposure to a wide range of poems;
2. allow students to make choices;
3. recognize emotional/personal response as a critical factor;
4. integrate poems with other dimensions of the curriculum;
5. emphasize individual construction of meaning; and
6. encourage poetry and personal prose as forms of response.

Although the number of studies of teachers teaching poetry is limited, the few we have suggest that these strategies liberate response and lead students to genuine connections with poetic expression. In Mr. Dillon's classroom, the poetry carts and the anthology assignment offered students a wide range of poetic styles and voices, allowed them to make choices, and encouraged personal response. In an environment saturated with poetry, Mr. Dillon asked frequently, "What do you like?" and "Why do you like it?" He allowed students to make choices in accordance with their own responses, then encouraged them to articulate those responses and to construct individual meanings. Poetry was not isolated from other dimensions of the curriculum. When students were studying Lord of the Flies, Mr. Dillon brought in Stephen Dobyns' "The Bleeder," for thematic links. At the conclusion of the study of the novel, students constructed found poems in lieu of taking a traditional test. Poetry and personal prose were not only encouraged as forms of response in this classroom; they were the primary modes of response. Mr. Dillon's practices stand in sharp contrast with the conventional approaches of

teacher- and text-dominated choices; strict focus on linear, cognitive response; teaching a few poems in isolation; emphasizing literary technique and terminology; and responding to poetry with analytical prose. Within the broad context of conventional high school English classrooms, where teachers may be uncomfortable with poetry and students are either indifferent or hostile, Mr. Dillon's classroom is highly unusual.

The Poetry of Teaching

The Dynamic Form of Teaching

Mr. Dillon's first teaching experience wasn't perfect. He was struggling with management, as were all of his peers, grappling with processes and demands that were more complex than he had known they would be. But, watching Mr. Dillon work, I remembered something I had heard my art history teacher, a painter, say when I was an undergraduate: "When I put the first stroke on the canvas, I am in charge. After that, everything is a dialogue with the canvas."

Mr. Dillon would often initiate an activity without any certainty of the ultimate outcome. After the moment of initiation, he was in dialogue with the situation--listening, thinking, responding, making spontaneous decisions. Maxine Greene writes of the aesthetic quality of moments in teaching when we

find ourselves thinking in front of the class,
with the end open, unresolved There is
something about the open-endedness and even the

uncertainty involved that enables us to reach out to our students, to communicate a kind of passion to them, no matter what we are teaching. (qtd. in Wear 1980, 287)

Eisner, too, writing of the teacher as artist, has pointed to the dynamic nature of teaching. "Analyzing a situation, thinking on one's feet to choose a course of action, and using one's imagination are all qualities of the artist and the craftsman" (qtd. in Zahorik 1987, 278). Donald Schön seems to be talking about the same capacities when he writes of "reflection-in-action . . . a reflective conversation with a unique and uncertain situation" (1983, 130). Schön describes the skilled practitioner's "moves," how they "produce unintended changes which give the situations new meanings. The situation talks back, the practitioner listens, and as he appreciates what he hears, he reframes the situation once again" (1983, 130). Schön calls this "artistic performance" and points to the performer's willingness to "enter into new confusions and uncertainties" (1983, 164).

Mr. Dillon's teaching was artistic in its dynamic nature, its desire for unity, its idiosyncrasy, its tolerance of ambiguity, its valuing of play, its inclusion of feeling, and, ultimately, in its power of transformation. The teacher-as-artist creates a world. When students are in that world, for whatever amount of time, they know they are in a different order, an order where they simultaneously experience a high degree of risk and a high degree of

safety. It is a world where uncertainty is permitted and explored, a world which allows each inhabitant to "dwell in possibility." Explorations go in multiple directions, both inward and outward, and are not always neatly linear. The business of the classroom is centered on connecting the inner and outer worlds, finding coherence, making meaning. In this kind of world, transformations occur.

Developing Teachers As Artists

Reitman and Reitman "audaciously contend that teaching is yet an art" (1988, 5). They submit that "authentic teaching, in its very essence, is a genuine art form" and suggest that "artists of the classroom ought to be prepared according to principles widely employed in training other kinds of artists" (1988, 5). The model they propose for teacher education is, however, limited by a lack of direct address of spontaneity, simultaneity, risk taking, or creative restructuring.

Carl Weinberg's explorations of how teachers might be nurtured in artistry are more promising. Weinberg's interest in cognitive processes led him to enter an art school to study painting. He wanted to observe himself "in the process of becoming a painter" (5). Five years later, he reported that

it is my distinct impression that teachers learn to be teachers, often in spite of their training, not by following cookbook psychology or behavioristic pedagogy, but rather by employing some of the same strategies that art students

employ in the process of becoming artists. And once they do become teachers with their own classrooms, they develop as professionals along the very same lines. (18)

Weinberg identifies some "major assumptions or principles" about learning in the arts that he has been able to transfer to his work with teachers and preservice teachers (1988, 19-23). These emphasize developing an understanding of how one likes to work and of what expresses one's uniqueness; learning to trust intuition and make quick decisions; learning from models of excellence; learning from other students in a mutually nurturing community; developing by experimentation and a willingness to risk failure; learning to value authenticity; and becoming committed to the process. Weinberg's valuing of uniqueness, intuition, and authenticity is synchronous with Eisner's "plea to enhance what is personally distinctive about teaching" and with his call for the "cultivation of productive idiosyncrasy" (1991, 79).

Although I had not at the time articulated it, I realize now that what I was doing in my work with the preservice teachers of "Poetry and Passion . . ." was preparing them to be artists of the classroom. I was working intuitively, not according to any conscious model, but according to what I knew as an artist about how to be in dialogue with form and in concert with a deeply embedded belief in the principles that Weinberg has articulated for the development of artists. Negative capability, as applied

to the act of teaching, includes the role of risk and allows for, even demands, authenticity and intuitive engagement. It presupposes "an understanding of how one likes to work and of what expresses one's uniqueness."

The preparation of teachers as artists would require significant rethinking of current teacher education programs. Recalling studies that "suggest that the treatment effects of teacher education wash out during field experiences," Virginia Koehler reminds us: "The research and improvement community has stated over and over again that we must 'get' the research on teaching and learning into the heads of teachers educators, but," she says, "the form in which research is delivered is probably not useful" (1985, 27).

I am suggesting that we explore possibilities for getting this information into the lived experiences of preservice teachers rather than simply getting it "into their heads." I am suggesting that artists might have something to teach us about "the forms" that might be useful for doing that. I am suggesting that we put terminology like "treatment effects" aside and think again in terms of human becoming.

The Art of Research

Artist as Researcher/Researcher as Artist

Somehow we have lost the human and passionate element of research. Becoming immersed in a study requires passion: passion for people, passion for communication, and passion for understanding

people. This is the contribution of qualitative research, and it can only enhance educational and human services practice. For too long we have allowed psychometrics to rule our research and thus to decontextualize individuals. In depersonalizing the most personal of social events, education, we have lost our way. Now it is time to return to a discourse on the personal, on what it means to be alive. (Janesick 1994, 217)

A "discourse on the personal" begins with the person of the researcher, with that researcher's own idiosyncracies and unique strengths. Not all researchers will work optimally in the same way. Whatever their individual modes, however, all researchers need experience with seeing and representing. It is the researcher's essential role, Eisner contends, "to highlight, to explain . . . to call to our attention . . . to deepen and broaden our experience . . . to help us understand what we are looking at" (1991, 59). These are also essential roles of the artist.

The artist is a researcher with his or her whole organism--inquiring, testing with the body as well as the mind--sensing and seeing, responding, retesting, a multitude of functions performed simultaneously, registering complexity, then sorting, finding pattern, making meaning. To the extent that the artist is a connoisseur (Eisner 1979, 1991), to the extent that he or she has a rich repertoire of experiences against which/within the context of which to "test" (Schön 1983), the artist becomes an astute

researcher, capable of illuminations and new meanings, new visions of possibility.

The equation goes both ways. The researcher working in this fine-tuned way is an artist. The artist working in a skilled, informed way is a researcher.

Evocative Modes as Interpretation

To see, shape, select, and form is to interpret. When an artist represents knowledge, he or she offers, with the work of art itself, an interpretation of experience. Poets and novelists don't go around "interpreting" their own work. They leave that to others as another genre with its own purposes.

The representations included in this dissertation do not claim to be art in the same sense as a collection of poems or a novel. But the processes that generated these representations were sufficiently artistic and interpretive that the subsequent application of secondary layers of discursive interpretation feels alien and redundant. Part of the potential value of works like these is to function as stimuli for discussion and for varying interpretations, both competing and complementary. A recurring theme in the work of Jacob Bronowski is the role of imagination in both science and art. He makes the following observation:

In [the role of imagination], there is no difference between a great theorem, like that of Pythagoras, and a great poem like Homer's *Iliad*. The difference lies at a deeper level: Pythagoras is deliberately trying to mean the same thing to everybody who listens to him--one thing and one

thing only--and Homer is not. Homer is content to say something universal and yet to mean different things to everybody who listens to him. (1978, 16)

The embrace of multiple meanings is part of the artist's way of seeing, being, teaching, and researching. In relation to meaning, the artist's primary interpretive mode is embodiment rather than explanation.

Final Words: The Politics of Method

Eisner has pointed out that issues of method are ultimately political. "The forms we employ exclude as well as invite" (1991, 245). He calls on the academy to "expand our conception of human cognition," acknowledge a wider range of ways of knowing, and learn to hear voices that have been excluded on the basis of limited definitions of knowledge and intellect (1991, 245).

When we limit the content to generalization of what can be said in a literal mode, we limit what can be said. The epistemological utility of the literary narrative or the metaphorical characterization is precisely that such forms convey what literal language cannot represent--or at least cannot represent as well. The form of a text is a part of its meaning, and when meaning is restricted to the literal, those meanings that require other forms must remain voiceless. (1991, 203)

Eisner points out that because some kinds of knowledge are privileged over others, "some doctoral students are frightened off into more conventional studies, even when their hearts are elsewhere" (1991, 241). Others are even more deeply silenced; they avoid the doctoral experience

altogether. I know poets with MFAs who choose, painfully, not to seek a PhD because the processes required for the dissertation are so antithetical to their natural and cultivated ways of knowing that the academic requirements would be experienced as psychic violence. These are people of powerful intellect and vision; many of them are also committed teachers who accept lifetimes of temporary and adjunct positions in order to maintain relations with classrooms. Their voices remain muted, just outside the walls of the academy. When the academy doors are closed to all but a few ways of knowing and representing knowledge, the worlds of teaching and educational research lose significant sources of insight, energy, and commitment.

Aronowitz and Giroux assert that the dominant culture "functions to marginalize and disconfirm knowledge forms and experiences that are extremely important to subordinate and oppressed groups" (1985, 147). They name specifically several such groups: women, racial minorities, and the working class. We might add to that list: artists.

The methodologies that produced this dissertation and the dissertation itself represent my own academic unsilencing. I choose not to be one of those doctoral students "frightened off into more conventional studies" (Eisner 1991, 241), not to be a poet driven away from a PhD by limited definitions of knowledge and form. Yet, this dissertation is not so radical. The modes of representation

exemplified here are renderings of data gathered in standard qualitative ways. The interpretive renderings of the data simply borrow from the structural and rhetorical strategies of a poet, enacting the poet's goal: to give the reader an experience, some "knowledge in the body" about what it means to be learning to teach--specifically, about what it means to be learning to teach as an artist.

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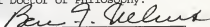
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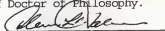
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Anne McCrary Sullivan grew up on the coast of North Carolina, attended junior high and high school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and earned a B.A. in French at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. She spent her junior year studying at the University of Lyon, in France. For twelve years, she taught English, creative writing, and French at Robert E. Lee High School in Baytown, Texas, where she also advised the literary magazine and coached the Academic Decathlon team. In 1992, she graduated from the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers, with an MFA in Poetry. Her poems have appeared in a number of publications, including Tar River Poetry, The Gettysburg Review, Concho River Review, and The English Journal.


I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


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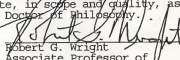
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